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SOME ANIMAL BELIEFS FROM ARISTOTLE

BY P. J. HEATHER

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Books quoted :

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|---|----------------|
| Aristotle, <i>Historia Animalium</i> | abb : A.H.A. |
| do. <i>de Partibus Animalium</i> | A.de P.A. |
| Pliny, <i>Natural History</i> | Pl. |
| Aelian, <i>de Natura Animalium</i> | Ael. |
| Solinus, <i>Polyhistor</i> | S. |
| Isidore of Seville, <i>Etymologiarum</i> | I.S. |
| John Maplet, <i>A Greene Forest</i> | Maplet. |
| (Reprinted from the Edition of 1567, The Hesperides Press, London, 1930.) | |
| Sir Thomas Browne, <i>Pseudodoxia</i> | Sir T. Browne. |
| <i>Mabinogion</i> (Everyman) | Mabinogion. |
| <i>Cambridge Natural History</i> | C.N.H. |
| Cuvier's <i>Animal Kingdom</i> (with additional descriptions, London, diff. dates) | Cuvier. |
| <i>British Birds</i> (Kirkman & Jourdain, London and Edinburgh, 1935) | British Birds. |

SOME of the beliefs about animals, which are recorded by Aristotle in his *Historia Animalium*, and *de Partibus Animalium*, will be considered in this article, and their history at certain intervals in their existence will be set down, comparison being made with the writings of later authors. The stages chosen for reference are the *Natural History* of Pliny, of the first century A.D.; the *de Natura*

Animalium of Aelian, of the second century ; the *de Memorabilibus Mundi* of Solinus, of the third ; the *Etymologiarum* of Isidore of Seville, of the seventh ; the *A Greene Forest* of John Maplet, of 1567. Even as much interest may attach, from the geographical standpoint, to a map showing the various localities from which some particular belief has been recorded ; so, on the historical side, a similar interest may belong to a chronological comparison in which are shown records of the existence of a belief at various periods of its history.

In an essay of this sort, it is well to begin with a writer of known reliability, and regarding this quality, we may quote from a letter written by Charles Darwin, at the time of the publication of William Ogle's translation of the *de Partibus* in 1882. The passage is given in the volume of the Loeb Classical Library which contains a new translation by A. L. Peck, and runs as follows : " From quotations which I had seen, I had a high notion of Aristotle's merits, but I had not the most remote notion what a wonderful man he was. Linnaeus and Cuvier have been my two gods, though in very different ways, but they were mere schoolboys to old Aristotle." From such a man as Darwin, this was high praise indeed, and, always bearing in mind that the number of doubtful statements made by Aristotle bears a very small proportion to the total of those he made, we shall join in the wonder expressed by our English man of science, when we have examined the two works mentioned above. We need not, indeed, be misled into considering that our author was infallible, for, like Homer, he nods occasionally. But we shall be struck with the persistence of belief in the statements which he makes.

Some preliminary remarks are called for :

(1) In dealing with an author who wrote over 2000 years ago, and in a language not our own, there is bound to be much difficulty in deciding what were the actual words used

by him, and their exact meaning, and in this case modern editors in many passages doubt the genuineness of the text which has come down to us. Therefore in all such instances, Aristotle is entitled to the benefit of any doubt which exists.

(2) There are many statements made in the books where our author safeguards himself by quoting the opinions of others, without committing himself to a belief in their truth. We must be careful to exclude all such statements from a list of his errors.

(3) Passages occur where the meaning is not absolutely clear, or where the identification of the species referred to is not established beyond question ; some of the remarks upon the swan, the halcyon's nest, the crake and the thos illustrate this difficulty. We must allow uncertainty to prevail.

A limited number of passages remain, after allowing for these exclusions and doubts, in which the facts are at variance with the statements made by our author.

We may begin a detailed consideration, by taking the subject of longevity. The highest figure Aristotle mentions in this respect is that for the elephant ; three separate figures are given, 300 years ; 200, and 120. These estimates are based upon what is said by others. Passing on to Pliny and Aelian, we find that these writers attribute a limit of life of 200 years to the beast in two places, though adding that some reach 300. Solinus and Isidore of Seville both fix 300 years.¹ The writer in the *Cambridge Natural History* considers that 150 years is not beyond probability, and adds that longer periods have been assigned to it.² Aristotle writes, too, about other animals ; of the camel, that it lives about 30 years, though in a previous passage he has already ascribed to it more than 50 years, and states further that

¹ A.H.A. viii. 9 ; ix. 46. Pl. viii. 10 (10). Ael. iv. 31 ; xvii. 7. S. c. 38. I.S. xii. 2.

² C.N.H. vol. x, pp. 222-3.

instances of the age of 100 have been known. Aelian records that the Bactrian camel lives 100 years, and Solinus gives the same limit. Maplet—Of the Cammell—says: "They live some of them 50 yeres and some of them 100."³

Aristotle records the mule as living to the age of 80, and Pliny, too, quotes a famous case at Athens.⁴ The *Historia Animalium* gives to the horse in general 18 to 20 years, and to the mare the ordinary limit of 25, 40 in exceptional cases; to the horse he allows 50 years, "with extreme care"; though in another passage he says that it has been known to attain 75. Pliny places on record the age of 74 years or 75, according to the text we accept; Aelian quotes Aristotle for the age of 75; Solinus mentions 70. Centuries later, Isidore is fuller in his information, saying that Persian, Hun, Epirote and Sicilian horses live to beyond 50, while the limit of the Spanish, Numidian and Gallic is shorter.⁵ Aristotle mentions in a passage of which the authenticity is challenged, that the partridge lives up to 16 years, but another example affirmed by him is that of the ring-dove, cases being quoted of 25, 30 and even 40 years. For the latter, Pliny gives 30, and 40 years in some cases.⁶

But our author is not always content to accept hearsay; he rejects as fabulous the tradition that stags attain great age. This tradition, as we know, has lingered long in folklore, the story of the Stag of Redynvre finding a place in the tale of Kilhwch and Olwen in the *Mabinogion*.⁷

It is hard to say whether Aristotle's information in recording the ages given above is trustworthy or not; but though they appear to be exaggerated, it is possible that

³ A.H.A. viii. 9. Ael. iv. 55. S.c. 62. Maplet, p. 130.

⁴ A.H.A. vi. 24. Pl. viii. 44 (69). Ael. vi. 49.

⁵ A.H.A. v. 14; vi. 22. Pl. viii. 42 (66). Ael. xv. 25. I.S. xii. 1.

⁶ A.H.A. ix. 7. Pl. x. 35 (52).

⁷ Mabinogion, pp. 123-4.

they are correct when we bear in mind how instances occur from time to time of extreme old age being attained by human beings. While dealing with this subject, we may recall Pliny's scale of life ;⁸ the life of the crow is nine times that of man : the life of the stag four times that of the crow, and the life of the raven three times that of the stag. If we consider man's life to last 70 years, this scale would give to the stag a life-time of over two thousand years, and to the raven over seven thousand years ; a truly handsome allowance, though it is only fair to Pliny to say that he rejects the story of the age of the Phoenix : Solinus gives this as 540, adding that many say it reaches 12954 years.⁹

Another subject to which Aristotle often refers is that of generation. We read that eels are not the issue of pairing. Isidore says that their origin is from the mud ; and John Maplet has : " Aristotle saith that it ingendreth of the Mud." ¹⁰ The real facts as to their generation have only recently been discovered, and, until some 50 years ago, and perhaps more recently still, it was believed among fisher-folk in our own country that the small twigs found at the bottom of rivers turned in due course into young eels. Small wonder is it that when men of science fail to solve a problem, the folk offer their own solution ! In this case we may fairly grant inaccuracy on Aristotle's part. In several other passages he refers to the conception of animals arising from some peculiar circumstance. Thus he tells us that " it has been said " that the mare becomes wind-impregnated. Pliny states that in Lusitania mares conceive from the West-wind, and later repeats the statement, with the name of the place changed from Lusitania to Spain. Solinus too accepts the belief. It will be seen that Aristotle here safeguards himself by quoting others.¹¹

⁸ A.H.A. vi. 29. Pl. vii. 48 (49). ⁹ Pl. vii. 48 (49). S. c. 46.

¹⁰ A.H.A. vi. 16. Pl. x. 68 (87). Maplet, p. 143.

¹¹ A.H.A. vi. 18. Pl. viii. 42 (67) ; xvi. 25 (39). S. c. 36.

Another passage, where Aristotle similarly throws the responsibility for veracity on others, is that in which he says that some people assert that a mouse by licking salt can become pregnant. Here again, he is supported by Pliny, while Aelian varies the statement by saying that tasting salt produces a more numerous brood.¹² Aristotle, however, makes a definite statement about the partridge, when he alleges that the female bird conceives, when she stands to leeward of the male. Pliny and Solinus concur, and Aelian quotes Aristotle.¹³ A definite statement is also made by our author about the generation of the grey mullet, some of which, he says, are produced spontaneously from mud and sand: and he is equally definite about the spontaneous growth of sponges and sea-nettles.¹⁴ Certain insects, too, he declares, are generated in the same way, following this up by saying that lice, fleas and bugs are so bred; into his theory he introduces the assertion that these insects generate nits, and "these nits generate nothing." In these cases we cannot acquit him of the charge of error.¹⁵ In a chapter thought to be spurious by some modern editors a further mention of the generation of fish from mud and sand is made.¹⁶

We now turn to some other beliefs about animals. The elephant, says Aristotle, contrary to the belief of some people, does not sleep in a standing position, but bends its legs and lies down. In this he is refuting the popular belief that the beast has no joints, which was maintained by Aelian and Solinus. The latter writer says that the elk shares this peculiarity with the elephant.¹⁷ Modern scientific opinion admits that the development of angulation in the limbs of the elephant is very slight.¹⁸ Here our author

¹² A.H.A. vi. 37. Pl. x. 64 (85). Ael. ix. 3.

¹³ A.H.A. vi. 2. Ael. xvii. 15. S. c. 12.

¹⁴ A.H.A. v. 16. ¹⁵ A.H.A. v. 1; v. 31.

¹⁶ A.H.A. ii. 1.

¹⁷ A.H.A. ii. 1. Ael. iv. 31. S. c. 33.

¹⁸ C.N.H. x, p. 217.

is correct, but in another passage we are told of the hippopotamus, that it has "feet cloven in twain, and instead of nails—hooves." Both Solinus and Isidore speak of cloven hooves for this animal; but in his note, Sir D'Arcy Thompson tells us, "The hippopotamus has four toes."¹⁹

On the subject of the lion, Aristotle has been thought to be somewhat prone to error; but he corrects the popular idea that it has no marrow.²⁰ Aelian repeats this idea;²¹ but Pliny records that to be invincible magicians take tail and head of dragon; hair and marrow of lion; foam of horse; claws of dogs' feet, and tie all up in a deer's skin; thus recognizing the fact that the lion does possess at least some marrow.²² Aristotle also gives his support to Homer's statement that the lion dreads fire.²³ He has much to say about the tiger: "if we are to believe Ctesias . . . the Indian wild beast called the 'martichoras' has a triple row of teeth in both upper and lower jaw; . . . it resembles man in its face and ears; . . . its eyes are blue and its colour vermilion, . . . it has a sting in the tail, and has the faculty of shooting off arrow-wise the spines that are attached to the tail." It will be noticed that support for these alleged properties is only conditional. Pliny, Aelian and Solinus all tell of this beast, the last-named describing its colour as blood-red. Maplet says that it is "named of the Persians arrowe, which they call Tiger, in their phrase of speche."²⁴ Of another feline, the panther, we read, "They say that the panther has found out that wild animals are fond of the scent it emits." This characteristic is referred to by Pliny and Solinus, who add that the reason for its hiding itself is that the savageness of its face terrifies other animals.

¹⁹ A.H.A. note on 499 b 10. Pl. viii. 25 (39). S. c. 45.

²⁰ A.H.A. iii. 7. Pl. xi. 37 (86).

²¹ Ael. iv. 34.

²² Pl. xxix. 4 (20).

²³ A.H.A. ix. 44. S. c. 40.

²⁴ A.H.A. ii. 1. Pl. viii. 21 (30). Ael. iv. 21. S. c. 65. Maplet, p. 175.

Aelian also refers to its smell. Once more, we have in Maplet, "The Panther his smell or breath, to all things liuing except the Dragon, is most delectable and pleasant. Insomuch that all the other follow after hir, moued with that hir scent." ²⁵

We come now to the widespread story of the bear-cub. Aristotle mentions the smallness of its size, and adds, "its legs and most of its organs are as yet inarticulate." He does not refer to the mother licking it into shape in this place, but elsewhere we learn that the young of the vixen are even more inarticulately formed, but are warmed and fashioned into shape by the licking of the vixen. Pliny confirms the size of the bear-cub, and adds a third to the list of unformed young—the lion-cub. He, with Aelian, Solinus and Isidore, writes of the process of licking. The two authors last named attribute the shapelessness of the young to the shortness of the gestation period.²⁶ The memory of the belief survives in the French saying: *C'est un ours mal léché*.

There are two references to the wolf that we may notice. The first runs as follows: "There is an account of the parturition of the she-wolf that borders on the fabulous, to the effect that she confines her lying-in to within twelve particular days of the year. . . . Whether the account be correct or not has not yet been verified; I give it merely as it is currently told. There is no more of truth in the current statement that the she-wolf bears once and once only in her life-time." In Aelian we find a more rational, though still doubtful, account; according to him, the lying-in period lasts twelve days and twelve nights. He, like Aristotle, explains that the Delians say that Leto took this space of

²⁵ A.H.A. ix. 6. Pl. viii. 17 (23); xxi. 7 (18). Ael. v. 40. S. c. 27. I.S. xii. 2. Maplet, p. 162.

²⁶ A.H.A. vi. 30. Pl. viii. 36 (54); x. 63 (83). Ael. ii. 19. S. c. 34. I.S. xii. 2.

time in coming from the Hyperboreans to Delos. Isidore, taking another line, limits the coition of the animals to twelve days in the whole year.²⁷ We may remark that the bearing of one cub in the life-time of any animal would result inevitably in the extinction of the race; for, if every female of any species produced but one, the number of births would decrease from generation to generation, till the last specimen perished. The second reference made by our writer to this beast is found in the *de Partibus* to the effect that, like the lion, the wolf has a rigid neck. Aelian quotes the lion, and Solinus the hyena for this belief. Pliny gives all three.²⁸ The reason given by Aristotle for the inability to bend is that the neck consists of one bone only in the two animals he names. A further belief recorded but dismissed by the same writer as untrue, is that the hyena possesses the organs both of male and female. In this animal Pliny and Aelian both admit a change of sex year by year.²⁹

We are told of the camel that he "likes turbid and thick water, and will never drink from a stream until he has trampled it into a turbid condition." Aelian too records this preference, and Maplet tells us that they "haue their best delight in drinking then when as by foote they trouble the water." ³⁰

The sow, it is said, if she have one of her eyes knocked out, is almost sure to die soon afterwards.³¹ The dolphin is another animal about which Aristotle records a belief. He says: "It appears to be the fleetest of all animals, marine and terrestrial, and it can leap over the masts of large vessels." Pliny, Aelian and Solinus tell the same story,

²⁷ A.H.A. vi. 35. Pl. viii. 22 (34). Ael. iv. 4. S. c. 8. I.S. xii. 2.

²⁸ A.de P.A. 686 a 22. Pl. xi. 37 (67). Ael. x. 26. S. c. 40.

²⁹ A.H.A. vi. 32. Pl. viii. 30 (44); xxviii. 8 (27). Ael. i. 25.

³⁰ A.H.A. viii. 8. Ael. xvii. 7. Maplet, p. 130.

³¹ A.H.A. vi. 18.

repeated by Maplet in these words : " There is no Fish in the whole sea so swift as this is : for oftentimes through that light and nimble leaping that they haue they mount ouer the tops of Ships." ³²

Many things, not all of them correct, are told us of reptiles. Thus we read that the crocodile moves its upper jaw, and has no tongue. Pliny, however, states that it lacks, not a tongue, but the use of its tongue, and this proposition is more easily reconciled with the truth. Solinus agrees with both assertions, and Maplet follows suit in regard to the former. Modern research tells that " The lower jaw being prolonged behind the cranium gives an appearance of mobility to the upper ; and the ancients believed that this was the case ; but it moves only with the entire head." and " The fleshy tongue is flat, and attached to the floor of the mouth as far as within a very little of its edges, which led the ancients to believe that it was altogether wanting." ³³ Aristotle also states that the legs both of the crocodile and the lizard bend forward ; Sir D'Arcy Thompson's comment is : " This is at variance with fact." ³⁴

Unfounded belief was rife in old times about the salamander, and Aristotle repeats what he has heard. The salamander " so the story goes, not only walks through the fire but puts it out in doing so." Pliny repeats the tale, and Aelian says : " it joins battle with the flame." Isidore says : " that it lives in the midst of flame, and is not only not burnt but extinguishes the fire." The belief lingered on till the sixteenth century, and we find Maplet setting down : " He liueth onely in the fire and is nothing hurt through the fire his flame." In the seventeenth century, however, Sir Thomas Browne will have none of this ; in

³² A.H.A. ix. 48. Pl. ix. 8 (7). Ael. xii. 12. S. c. 22. Maplet, p. 140.

³³ A.H.A. i. 11 ; ii. 10. Pl. viii. 25 (37) ; xi. 37 (60) & (65). S. c. 45. Cuvier, vol. ix. pp. 99, 98,

³⁴ A.H.A. ii. 1. Pl. xi. 45 (102).

his *Pseudodoxia* he writes : " For experimental conviction, *Mathiolus* affirmeth, he saw a Salamander burnt in a very short time." ³⁵ After that, there is no excuse for remaining in error. One other belief, based upon hearsay, is recorded about serpents : " they say that if you prick out a serpent's eyes they will grow again." Pliny tells the same story. ³⁶

Of the birds we will take first the eagle. Of the sea-eagle we are told that it forces its young to look at the sun. This belief is recorded by Pliny and Aelian; Isidore repeats it, and Maplet, ever ready to tell a good tale, has : " Hee taketh his yong when as they be yong and tender, and haue not ful stedfastnesse in their eies, and holdeth them with there eies right opposite to the sunne beames." ³⁷ There is a second story of the eagle; that in its old age its beak becomes crooked and the bird dies of starvation. Pliny too has this tale, but does not give the origin of the deformity, which Aristotle explains by the story of a man refusing entertainment to a stranger, and being punished in the form of an eagle for this impiety. ³⁸ This myth, so Sir D'Arcy Thompson's note informs us, is of Egyptian ancestry.

The Swan's song now calls for our attention. " They are musical, and sing chiefly at the approach of death." Pliny and Aelian, who quotes Aristotle, both mention this tale, while Isidore telling of the sweetness of the song, does not connect it with death. This belief too, lasted long, for we have it in Maplet : " The Swanne is called the sweete singing Birde, for that, . . . before hir death she ioyeth." ³⁹

There is also a curious tale about the swallow. This may be quoted from Maplet : " Aristotle saith in the same booke

³⁵ A.H.A. v. 19. Pl. x. 67 (86). Ael. ii. 31. I.S. xii. 4. Maplet, p. 168. Sir T. Browne—Bk. iii. c. 14.

³⁶ A.H.A. ii. 17. Pl. xi. 37 (55).

³⁷ A.H.A. ix. 34. Pl. x. 3 (3). Ael. ii. 26. I.S. xii. 7. Maplet, p. 142.

³⁸ A.H.A. ix. 32. Pl. x. 3 (4).

³⁹ A.H.A. ix. 12. Pl. x. 23 (32). Ael. v. 34. I.S. xii. 7. Maplet, p. 171.

that the eyen of his yong whilest they be tender, being hurt, he fecheth straight waies medicine at the herbe Calcedonies hande." Pliny, in his record of this remedy, refers more correctly to the herb chelidonia; Aelian does not mention injury to eyes of the young birds, but says that they receive their sight late with the aid of a herb.⁴⁰ Aristotle deals also with the migration or hibernation of the bird. He admits that some migrate: "others . . . simply hide themselves where they are. Swallows, for instance, have been often found in holes quite denuded of their feathers." A writer of the nineteenth century tells: "A bishop of Upsal in 1555 (*Olaus Magnus*) . . . asserted that the fishermen in northern countries frequently caught in their nets clusters of swallows attached closely to each other, which, if kept sufficiently warm, were soon restored to animation" and adds that this was "supported by even the great Linnaeus."⁴¹

Another story is that about the bird called the goat-sucker; its name in Greek, Latin and English tells of the superstition relating to it. Aristotle refrains from giving it a bad name, on his own authority, by referring to it as the "so-called goat-sucker," but adds definitely that it sucks goats. Pliny, like Aristotle, adds the further information that the goat so sucked goes blind. Aelian in his account says the teat dries up. It is noteworthy that in this detail Aelian, who has been considered credulous enough to accept any story, should give a version more easy to believe than that of Aristotle. The writer in the *Cambridge Natural History* says: "The superstitious of all classes are inclined to view these birds with dread, a fact due to their nocturnal habits."⁴²

⁴⁰ A.H.A. ii. 17. Pl. viii. 27 (41); xi. 37 (55); xxv. 8 (50). Ael. iii. 25; xvii. 20. Maplet, p. 171.

⁴¹ A.H.A. viii. 16. Pl. x. 24 (34). Cuvier, vii. p. 84.

⁴² A.H.A. ix. 30. Pl. x. 40 (56). Ael. iii. 39; xvi. 22. C.N.H. ix. p. 418.

In addition to giving an account of the habits of the cuckoo, Aristotle also tells that it is said by some to be a hawk transformed. Sir D'Arcy Thompson has a most interesting note upon this passage, in which he points out that the origin of the fabled metamorphosis lies deeper than the resemblance between the two birds. He mentions further that the hawk and the hoopoe are both solar emblems, and that there is a confusion between the cuckoo and the hoopoe owing to the similarity of note. Both pigeon and cuckoo, in Chinese folklore, change shape with the hawk.⁴³ Aristotle also refers to a change in the hoopoe's appearance, and gives two other examples of shape-shifting—between the redbreast and the redstart, and between the blackcap and the beccafico.⁴⁴

But our writer definitely pronounces against the truth of the story told about the crane—that it carries as ballast a stone in its inside. This stone when vomited up, serves as a touch-stone for gold. Aelian has the same tale. Pliny, Solinus and Isidore write of a stone held by the bird when watching; if the stone falls, it wakes the crane by its fall.⁴⁵ Is there, perchance, any connection, due to confusion or otherwise, between the two accounts?

Two more tales call for notice. Aristotle says of the scallop: "some aver that scallops can actually fly, owing to the circumstance that they often jump right out of the apparatus by means of which they are caught." Pliny goes further, saying that they leap and fly about.⁴⁶ The second refers to the octopus: "Some say that the octopus devours its own species, but this statement is incorrect." Sir D'Arcy Thompson's note on this is: "But Johnston has actually found in the stomachs of *Loligo vulgaris* the beaks of small individuals of its own species."⁴⁷

⁴³ A.H.A. vi. 7.

⁴⁴ A.H.A. ix. 49B.

⁴⁵ A.H.A. viii. 12. Pl. x. 23 (30). Ael. ii. 1; iii. 13. S. c. 15. I.S. xii. 7.

⁴⁶ A.H.A. iv. 4. Pl. ix. 33 (52).

⁴⁷ A.H.A. viii. 2.

Next, we come to insects. "Spiders," we are told, "can spin webs from the time of their birth, not from their interior—as Democritus avers, but off their body as a kind of tree-bark, like the creatures that shoot out with their hair, as for instance the porcupine." Here, Pliny, Aelian and Isidore are more accurate, affirming that it is *from within* the body that the thread is drawn.⁴⁸ Of the wasp we read: "wasps notwithstanding their small size continue living after severance."⁴⁹ Again, our author makes several references to king-bees, and he speaks of two kinds of these "kings." Pliny, Aelian and Isidore make the same statement, and Maplet writes of the bee, "Of some they are reputed ciuill, for that they have their King and Guides."⁵⁰

We come lastly to a branch of the subject, which is the special domain of folklore, that which deals with amulets, omens and auguries. Aristotle does not explicitly mention the superstition about the echeneis or remora holding back ships, though he gives the name, adding that the fish is used by some "as a charm to bring luck in affairs of law and love."⁵¹ In another place, we read of "sneezing—used as an omen and regarded as supernatural."⁵² When writing of milk derived from he-goats, he says: "Such occurrences, however, are regarded as supernatural and fraught with omen as to futurity."⁵³ So again, "A mare has been known to cast two mules; but such a circumstance was regarded as unnatural and portentous."⁵⁴ The direction of the wind is considered to influence the sex of the future offspring of sheep and goats;⁵⁵ and weather prognostics are drawn from the behaviour of cattle.⁵⁶ Of the crake we read:

⁴⁸ A.H.A. ix. 39. Pl. xi. 24 (28) Ael. i. 21. I.S. xii. 5.

⁴⁹ A.H.A. iv. 7.

⁵⁰ A.H.A. v. 22. Pl. xi. 11 (10). Ael. v. 10. I.S. xii. 8. Maplet, p. 125.

⁵¹ A.H.A. ii. 14. cf. Pl. ix. 25 (41). cf. Ael. ii. 17. cf. I.S. xii. 6.

⁵² A.H.A. i. 11.

⁵³ A.H.A. iii. 20.

⁵⁴ A.H.A. vi. 22.

⁵⁵ A.H.A. vi. 19. cf. Ael. vii. 27.

⁵⁶ A.H.A. vi. 21.

"an unlucky bird." ⁵⁷ We are told about auguries: "Sooth sayers take notice of cases where animals keep apart from one another, and cases where they congregate together." ⁵⁸ The belief in the significance of odd and even numbers is reflected in Aristotle's statement that the titmouse is said always to lay an odd number of eggs. Modern observation accords to the Long-tailed Tit as the number of eggs, "usually 8 or 9 to 11, but all intermediate numbers up to 20 are said to have occurred." ⁵⁹ Reference is made too by Aristotle to supposed qualities of right and left limbs and to enmities between certain animals.

In these particulars, Aristotle follows the ideas of his day, and reference can be made to similar passages in Pliny, Aelian and Isidore of Seville.

We have in this article traced through the centuries many animal beliefs, and as we have been searching Aristotle's works with a folklore bias we have naturally paid attention chiefly to those which are unfounded or doubtful. Other beliefs might be considered and more links added to the chain of authors quoted, but enough has been reviewed to show the trend of ideas throughout a long period. We have been dealing, it is true, with the written or printed word, and not with direct oral tradition; but Aristotle himself had no objection to drawing on fables and general knowledge in making his statements, so that we may feel assured that the lore of the people, at any rate of that section that was interested in his day in the subjects of which he writes, is not removed by any insuperable gulf from what we read in the two books of his we have been considering.

Our examination has shown how widespread and enduring is the influence of authority. When people's minds became aware of the importance of independent research, Sir Thomas Browne was prominent among the writers of his

⁵⁷ A.H.A. ix. 17.

⁵⁸ A.H.A. ix. 1. cf. Ael. iii. 9.

⁵⁹ A.H.A. ix. 15. British Birds, p. 63.

day in setting himself resolutely on the side of investigation rather than on that of adherence to authority, and what he wrote is worth quoting: "*Hippocrates* about 2000 years ago, conceived it no injustice, either to examine or refute the Doctrines of his Predecessors: *Galen* the like, and *Aristotle* the most of any." ⁶⁰ It need be no matter for surprise, that the great learning and critical ability of such a man as Aristotle should command general appreciation and assent. To find, as we do, that this assent should continue to be accorded for close on 2000 years, and that a writer of the age of Queen Elizabeth, John Maplet, is constantly writing, "As Aristotle saith," shows that there was a stage in the history of thought, and that a long stage, when men have been content to draw upon the fund of knowledge already accumulated, without taking proper pains to provide any independent verification. Aristotle was better qualified to stand the test of blind repetition than others; but we have seen that even he was not infallible, after all due allowance has been made for possible confusion and for corruption of the texts. In spite of this tendency to accept authority, we find variations in the beliefs recorded; the other authors we have quoted either derive their material from sources other than Aristotle, or have consciously made changes in what they have drawn from him; we find, too, in some cases, a tendency to place the beliefs upon a more rational basis. Members of the Folk-Lore Society, one of whose objects of study is the existence and the prevalence of beliefs, founded and unfounded, owe to the writer of the *Historia Animalium* and of the *de Partibus Animalium* a great debt of gratitude for recording many of these, those which he himself held, as well as those which he rejected as fabulous or mythical.

⁶⁰ Sir T. Browne—Bk. i. c. vi.



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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

THE purpose of this essay is to set down in order beliefs and superstitions, customs, myths, legends and traditions, together with proverbs and similes, relating to animals named in the Middle-English verse of the fourteenth century. If it be asked why verse has been chosen for the research, the answer is that the output of verse in English in that century was very great, while our prose was limited in extent, and only towards the end of the period did it become a common medium of literary expression. At the same time, quotations are made from prose works—*The Azenbite of Inweyt*, some of Wyclif's English writings, and Chaucer's prose. In another direction, the verse references are not limited entirely to one century, as Lazamon's *Brut*, the *Early South English Legendary*, and some other works, are earlier in date than A.D. 1300, while other poems, such as *The Destruction of Troy* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, are later than 1400.

One other remark is needed here. Some of the beliefs and other elements in the survey are based upon facts, and some upon misconceptions; both are recorded; for we cannot form an accurate impression of the picture in the mind of men in medieval times, unless both false and true, and the proportion existing between them, are remembered.

FROM CLASSICAL SOURCES

Included in the collection of references to animals which follows are parts of about thirty tales drawn from classical sources, and it is noteworthy that the greater part of these are to be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was much read in the fourteenth century, either in the original or in French translations. As we know, neither of these languages presented any difficulty to Gower, who reproduced many of the tales.

Metamorphoses

In about ten of these stories some change of shape or of some other prominent characteristic is recorded, and in one case the shape-shifting is caused entirely at the will of the person undergoing the change. Achelous, in his struggle with Hercules, thought he would "Be sleyhte in som manere ascape. And as he couthe himself forscape,"—he turned himself into an adder and then into a bull. But in more instances the change took place, not at the will of the person; it was due to prayer to the gods, when Cornix, praying to Pallas, was transformed into a crow: or to the compassion of the gods, who turned Ceyx and Alcyone into sea-birds, pitying the double death of the two. It was in answer to prayer, too, that Philomena was changed into a nightingale, and Progne into a swallow, while Tereus became, through the gods' vengeance, a lapwing:

And yit unto this dai men seith,
A lappewinke hath lore his feith
And is the brid falseste of alle.

Yet another example of a transformation effected in answer to prayer is given in the *Destruction of Troy*, where the Myrmidons, whose metamorphosis from ants into men is recorded by Ovid, are spoken of as follows:

(More of thies Myrmydons mell I not now,
Enabit in (pat aile,) (ne) Etill will I ferre,
How Mawros were men made on a day
At þe prayer of a prinse pat peopull hade lost.)¹

The jealousy of Juno was the reason why 'Calistona' was turned into a bear, and the same goddess was moved by the same feeling to change Yo into a cow.²

Another reason for the infliction of transformation was the display of some evil quality, which calls forth on the part of beings possessed of magic power or on the part of the gods a just retribution, "to make the punishment fit the crime,"—a permanent shape-shifting. Thus Circe transformed the com-

¹ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, iv. 2107-12; v. 6194-211; iv. 3092-6; viii. 2647-56; v. 5944, 6005, 6045-7. *Destruction of Troy*, 109-12.

² G.C.A. v. 6310; iv. 3321-3.

panions of Ulysses into various shapes, according as they resembled those animals in their characters. Had it not been for Ulysses' skill in sorcery, they had remained in those shapes. Other examples, actually permanent, recorded in Middle-English verse are those of Lycaon, turned by Jupiter into a wolf for his cruelty, and Actaeon, turned by Diana into a hart, and finally slain by his own hounds.³

We see, then, that readers in the fourteenth century would be acquainted with stories from the classics, giving a variety of motives for a change into animal shape. Such a change might be due to compassion, jealousy or vengeance, and might be permanent or temporary, and caused either by one's own will, or imposed at the will of others. While it is true that readers in that age were few, we must bear in mind that it is the written word that has survived to tell us what people were thinking ; further, that the use of the word " readers " need not exclude hearers as well, for any verses that were read aloud in hall. Even if we suppose that all hearers in hall had enough culture to remove them from the level of the folk to that of intellectuals, yet, during the 500 years that have elapsed between their time and ours, there has been ample opportunity for the intellectual belief to sink into folklore, and to rise again, more than once or twice. No excuse is needed, in a study of this kind, for recording not only the beliefs mentioned by an author like the writer of *Piers Plowman*, who was in close touch with the folk of his day, but those, as well, that are found in the poems of Gower and Chaucer. All beliefs that circulate in one stratum of society at any given time must be considered capable of circulating later on, in quite a different stratum. True, they may in the process of time assume somewhat altered forms, but these changes, in addition to the essential foundation of the belief, must be noted and weighed, if ever we are to understand the processes by which men's thoughts get modified in the course of time in an upward or downward direction, rising at one time to scientific theory, and falling again to superstitious credulity. Some useful purpose is served by recording the beliefs as they stand as landmarks, in our literature.

³ G.C.A. vi. 1445-53 ; vii. 3361-4 ; i. 368-71.

Other Beliefs

There remain other tales drawn from the classics which contain no stories of transformation, but incidental references to animals. Several of these deal with beasts that are mythical, or, at any rate, actual creatures so decked with fabulous characteristics as to be recognisable hardly or not at all. Among the mythical some are well known—the Centaurs, the Harpies, the Sirens—which were supposed to exist as species. We find the first of these described in the *Destruction of Troy*; the Harpies mentioned in Chaucer's *Boethius*; and the Sirens in several places, among them this passage from G.C.A.

An othre thing, who that recordeth,
 Lich unto this ensample acordeth,
 Which in the tale of Troie I finde.
 Sirenes of a wonder kynde
 Ben Monstres, as the bokes tellen,
 And in the grete Se thei duellen :
 Of body bothe and of visage
 Lik unto wommen of yong age
 Up fro the Navele on hih thei be,
 And doun benethe, as men mai se,
 Thei bere of fisshes the figure.
 And overthis of such nature
 Thei ben, that with so swete a stevene
 Lik to the melodie of hevene
 In wommanysshe vois thei singe,
 With notes of so gret likinge,
 Of such mesure, of such musike,
 Wherof the Schipes thei beswike
 That passen be the costes there.

Brutus, on his voyage from Troy, like Ulysses, passed by them without harm. Though the classical sirens were supposed to be three in number and to dwell in Italian waters, they were not limited to those seas, as Arthur found them in his march into Scotland.⁴

⁴ D. of Troy, 5526-34; 7711-59. Chaucer-Boe. iv. M7-35-6. G.C.A. i. 481-99. Lazamon, *Brut*, 1322-49; 21746-8. *Romaunt of the Rose*, 678-84. Ch-Boe. i. P: 1 77-81. D. of T. 13271-89. *A zenbite of Inwyrt*, p. 61, 8-15.

Of mythical beasts there are also mentioned several individuals: twice in his *Boethius* Chaucer mentions the Hydra, the many-headed beast of Lake Lerna; the Minotaur occurs in Gower's tale of Theseus and Ariadne:

King Mynos hadde in his kepinge
A cruel Monstre, as seith the geste :
For he was half man and half beste,

and in Chaucer's *Legend*; in the *Knights Tale*, also, there is a reference to Theseus' pennon—"in which ther was y-bete The Minotaur." Cerberus figures in the *Destruction of Troy* as a "pre hedet hounde" and the Medusa, one of the three daughters of Phorceus, whose tale Gower tells:

The thridde, as telleth in the tale,
Medusa hihte, and natheles
Of comun name Gorgones
In every contre ther aboute,
As Monstres whiche that men doute,
Men clepen hem; and bot on yhe
Among hem thre in pourpartie
Thei hadde, of which thei myhte se,
Now hath it this, now hath it sche;
After that cause and nede it ladde,
Be throwes ech of hem it hadde.
A wonder thing yet more amis
Ther was, wherof I telle al this:
What man on hem his chiere caste
And hem behield, he was als faste
Out of a man into a Ston
Forschape, and thus ful manyon
Deceived were, of that thei wolde
Misloke, wher that thei ne scholde.

Finally, later in the classic period, comes the story of Bucephalus, Alexander's horse, of which legendary details are related; the poem, *Alisaunder of Macedoine*, describes it:

A huge horsse & a hy·hee had that tyme,
The moste seemely in syght·that euer seg wyst.
Hee bore a hedde as a bole·y·brested to·ryght,

And had hard on his hedde·hornes y-grow,
Menne wern his meate·that hee moste looued ;

the *Life of Alisaunder* gives a similar account.⁵

There are in addition many ordinary animals mentioned in the classical tales to which our Middle-English verse refers ; thus Gower tells how Orestes :

after tok the dede cors
And let it drawe away with hors
Unto the hounde and to the raven ;
Sche was non other wise graven.

In the story of Jason and Medea, we read that Medea took the head of a raven, " Of nyne hundred wynter old," as an ingredient in her concoction for rejuvenating Aeson. We read, too, the tale of Phoebus and the Raven or Crow in both Gower and Chaucer ; how the god in his wrath turned the bird, which had been before as white as a swan, into a black raven. Phrixus we read of, and the ram with a golden fleece that Juno sent to carry him and his sister across the sea. Telegonus, Gower tells us, slew his father Ulysses with a spear, the pennon on which bore the sign of three fishes.⁶

The references to a swan in the story of Dido include Chaucer's mention of how

" the whyte swan
Ayeins his deeth beginneth for to singe,"

while Gower has misunderstood or misread the passage of Ovid which deals with her death, and has left us the following lines :

Sche scholde stonde in such degre
As whilom stod a Swan tofore,
Of that sche hadde hire make lore ;
For sorwe a fethere into hire brain
Sche schof and hath hireselve slain ;

⁵ Ch-Boe. iv. P. 6 19-21 ; M. 7 44-6. G.C.A. v. 5274-6. Ch-Leg. 1928 ; 2103-4. CTA. 978-80. *DI of T.*, 300. G.C.A. i. 400-18. *Alisaunder of Macedoine*, 1112-6. *L. of A.*, 684-95.

⁶ G.C.A. iii. 2075-8 ; v. 4133-5 ; iii. 792-814. Ch-CTH. 130-308. G.C.A. v. 4338-9 ; vi. 1648-50.

As king Menander in a lay
The sothe hath founde, wher sche lay
Sprantlende with hire wynges tweie,
As sche which scholde thanne deie
For love of him which was hire make.⁷

The store of tales from the classics is not yet exhausted ; a dog's death is taken as a prognostic in the tale that Gower tells of Paul Emilius, on the eve of his campaign against Perseus ; when he heard that his daughter's dog, Perse by name, was dead,

He seith, for such a prenostik
Most of an hound was to him lik :
For as it is an houndes kinde
To berke upon a man behinde,

The hound was tokne and prophecie
That lich an hound he scholde die,⁸

We may now deal with three stories introducing serpents into the narrative : that of the sacrifice devoured by a serpent when Tarquin took the town of Gabii : that of the death of Cleopatra, which both Gower and Chaucer describe, telling how she placed serpents in the tomb prepared for herself : and, thirdly, though this tale comes from the East and not from classical Europe, that of Adrian and Bardus ; the ape and the serpent both show their gratitude to Bardus for their rescue, the ape by offering a store of wood, when he went to seek faggots, and the serpent by letting fall from its mouth a precious stone, which had the property of returning to Bardus' purse each time it was sold.⁹

Another story from Gower, the details of which appear to have been taken rather from the medieval romance of Alexander, than from Plutarch's *Lives*, relates how Nectanabus, the Egyptian magician, assumed successively the shapes of a dragon, a wether, and an eagle.¹⁰

Lastly, the ears of an ass play their part in the tale of Midas, told by the Wife of Bath.¹¹

⁷ Ch-Leg. 1355-6. G.C.A. iv. 104-13. ⁸ G.C.A. ii. 1793-6: 1857-8.

⁹ G.C.A. vii. 4709-28; viii. 2571-7. Ch-Leg. 671-80. G.C.A. v. 5046 ff.

¹⁰ G.C.A. vi. 2063 ff.

¹¹ Ch-CTD. 972-6.

FOOD

The customary use of animals for food and descriptions of feasts have provided favourite themes for poets, especially in those times when occasions of plenty have been few and the chance of a shortage of food, or even famine, has been constantly before the mind of people living on the land with a narrow margin of reserve. One such description is to be found in *Winner and Waster* :

The bores hede schall be broghte with (bayes) appon lofte,
 Buk-tayles full brode in brothes there be-syde,
 Venyson with the frumentes, and fesanttes full riche,
 Baken mete ther-by one the burde sett,
 Chewettes of choppede flesche, charbiande fewlis,
 And iche a segge þat I see has sexe mens doke.
 If this were nedles note, anothir comes aftir,—
 Roste with the riche sewes, and the ryalle spyces,
 Kiddes cleuen by þ^e rigge, quarter(e)d swannes,
 Tartes of ten ynche, þat tenys myn hert
 To see þ^e borde ouer-brade with blasande disches,
 As it were a rayled rode with rynges and stones.
 The thirde mese to me were meruelle to rekken,
 For alle es Martynmesse mete þat I with moste dele,
 Noghte bot worttes with the flesche, with-owt wilde fowle,
 Saue ane hene to hym that the howse owethe ;
 And (3)e will hafe birdes bownn one a broche riche,
 Barnakes and buturs and many billed snyppes,
 Larkes and lyngwhittes, lapped in sogoure,
 Wodcokkes and wodwales, full wellande hote,
 Teeles and titmoyses, to take what (3owe) lykes ;
 (Caudel)s of conynges, & custadis swete,
 (Daryo)ls & dische-metis, þat ful dere coste,
 (Mawme)ne þat men clepen, 3our mawes to fill,
 (Twelue) mese at a merke, by-twen twa men,
 (Thog)he bot brynneth for bale 3our bowells with-in.¹²

Other references to the food of the comparatively wealthy are to be found : in *Winner and Waster*, of the Poultry in London, we have :

¹² *Winner and Waster*, 332-57.

Then passe to þ^e Pultrie, þ^e peple þ^e knowes,
 And ken wele þ¹ katour to knawen þ¹ fode,
 The herons, þ^e hasteletez, þ^e henne(s) wele serue(d),
 þ^e pertrikes, þ^e plouers, þ^e oþer pulled byrddes,
 þ^e albus, þ^(e) o(sul)les, þ^e egretes dere ; ¹³

In Clannesse we find a description of the Marriage of the King's Son ; the king's invitation runs :

“ For my boles & my boreȝ arn bayted & slayne,
 & my fedde foulez fatted with sclazt,
 My polyle þat is penne-fed & partrykes boþe,
 Wyth scheldeȝ of wylde swyn, swaneȝ & croneȝ ;
 Al is ropeled & rosted ryȝt to þe sete,
 Comeȝ cof to my corte, er hit colde worþe.”

So, too, in Hauelok we find a short list of the meats at Ubbe's feast :

Kranes, swannes, ueneysun,
 Lax, lampreys, and god sturgun,

with pyment and wines. Unfortunately, the author excuses himself for not dwelling longer on the meats. Chaucer, likewise, in his story of Cambinskan's feast, is as reticent as the author of Hauelok :

I wol nat tellen of hir strange sewes,
 Ne of hir swannes, ne of hir heronsewes,
 Eek in that lond, as tellen knyghtes olde,
 Ther is som mete that is ful deyntee holde,
 That in this lond men recche of it but smal ;
 Ther nis no man that may reporten al.¹⁴

In Sir Orpheo, when the king of Fairy and his train were out hawking,

Of game they fonde grete haunt,
 Fesaunt, heron and cormerant.

In Chaucer's Marchantes Tale, Januarie speaks :

“ Old fish and yong flesh wolde I have ful fayn.
 Bet is,” quod he, “ a pyk than a pikerel ;
 And bet than old boef is the tendre veel.

¹³ *W. & W.* 490-4.

¹⁴ *Clannesse*, 55-60. *Hauelok*, 1726-7. Ch-CTF. 67-72.

in his Frankeleyn's Tale :

Biforn him stant braun of the tusked swyn,
And " Nowel " cryeth every lusty man.

Again, *The Romaunt of the Rose* has :

But they defende them with lamprey,
With luce, with eles, with samouns,
With tendre gees, and with capouns,
With tartes, or with cheses fat,
With deynte flawnes, brode and flat,
With caleweys, or with pullaille,
With coninges, or with fyn vitaille,

with a reference, a few lines further, to " Roo-venisoun." ¹⁵

In striking contrast with this plenty and extravagance of the wealthy classes, the animal food of the poorer folk was very limited. The poor widow's food was :

Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye,
and we read in *Piers Plowman* of the food of people on the land :

I haue no peny, quod pers, Poletes to bugge,
Nouþer gees ne grys bote twey grene cheeses,

And I sigge, bi my soule I haue no salt Bacon,

though he had :

. . . eke a Cou, and a Calf and a Cart-Mare.

He says, further, that labourers were dissatisfied with such food :

May no peny ale hem paye ne no pece of bakoun,
But if it be fresch flesch other fische ; fryed other bake. ¹⁶

Another note from the country-side shows what a begging friar might be likely to get :

Or yeve us of your brawn, if ye have eny ;

Bacon or beef, or swich thing as ye finde.

¹⁵ *Sir Orpheo*, 295-6. Ch-CTE. 1418-20 ; CTF. 1254-5. *R. of R.* 7038-44.

¹⁶ Ch-C.T.B. 4035. *Piers Plowman*, A vii, 267-8, 271, 274 ; B vi, 311-2.

Other general fare is mentioned in the legend of Magdalena :

Venesun of heort and hynd : and of wilde swyn,

Gies and hennes, crannes and swannes : and porc, motoun
and beof.¹⁷

There is yet another aspect of customs connected with food, which is presented to us in the story of Haulok, in which we are told of the fisherman making his catch and trading with it :

Grim was fishere swiþe god,
And mikel couþe on the flod ;
Mani god fish þer-inne he tok,
Boþe with neth, and with hok.
He tok þe sturgiun, and þe qual,
And þe turbut, and lax with-al,
He tok þe sele, and þe hwel :
Keling he tok, and tumberel,
Hering, and þe makerel,
þe Butte, þe schulle, þe þornebake :

When he took lamprey, he sold them in Lincoln ; in exchange, among other things, he bought " Netes flesh, shepes, and swines." Haulok, acting as porter for the Earl's cook :

He bar up wel a carte lode
Of segges, laxes, of playces brode,
Of grete laumprees, and of eles. ¹⁸

In travellers' tales we find mention of some curious objects of food ; in the *Life of Alisaunder* a people is told of :

They weore mowthed so a mare.
Evetis, and snakes, and paddokes brode,
That heom thoughte mete gode.
Al vermyn they eteth,
Bestes, men, al quik they freteth.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ch-CTD. 1750, 1753. *Early South English Legendary*, lxvi. 342, 344.

¹⁸ H. 749-58, 781, 895-7.

¹⁹ *Life of Alisaunder*, 6125-9.

BEASTS

In this section we may consider some passages in Middle English verse which deal with animals known by repute in this country. Owing to our people's want of familiarity with the creatures portrayed we may expect a certain element of wonder and fable in the pictures drawn, and we shall not be disappointed. Some of the menagerie are purely mythical, and fable has played its part so well with others that it is hard to disentangle the actual creatures intended to be represented from the word-picture given to us.

THE BASILISK

In *Folk-Lore*, Vol. XXIX, p. 76, note 1, "On a Spanish Tale," we read: "There is a common popular superstition that old cocks lay an egg from which in seven years comes a basilisk. It is also said that it kills with its look the first person that it sees, but that it dies if the person sees it first."

Chaucer in his *Persones Tale* refers to this property of the animal: "right as the basilicok sleeth folk by the venim of his sighte." The belief is as old as Pliny's time, and is recorded by Isidore of Seville.²⁰

A STRANGE BIRD

Gower in his *Confessio Amantis* quotes from "Solyns" a description of a strange bird, as follows:

Among the bokes whiche I finde
 Solyns spekth of a wonder kinde,
 And seith of fowhles ther is on,
 Which hath a face of blod and bon
 Lich to a man in resemblance.
 And if it falle him so per chance,
 As he which is a fowhl of preie,
 That he a man finde in his weie,
 He wol him slen, if that he mai:
 Bot afterward the same dai,
 Whan he hath eten al his felle,
 And that schal be beside a welle,

²⁰ Ch-C.T.I. 852 ff.

In which whan he wol drinke take,
Of his visage and seth the make
That he hath slain, anon he thenketh
Of his misdede, and it forthenketh
So gretly, that for pure sorwe
He liveth noght til on the morwe.

A note on this passage in Macaulay's edition says: "This anecdote is told also in the *Mirour*, . . . , and there also it is ascribed to Solinus. I do not find it, however, in his book."²¹

BUCEPHALUS

See Classical.

CALES

This creature, which Alexander met in the course of his travels, is only known from this passage :

Ther he fond addren, and Monecores,
And a feolle worm, Cales, and Manticores ;
Broune lyouns, and eke white,
That wolden fayn his folk abyte.
Unicornes they fond in that wasten,
Feolle bores, and eke wilde swyn ;
And croched dragons, saun faile,
That alle heom gaf bataile.²²

CATATHLEBA

Another beast, the catathleba, has been thought to be the bison. Its power of killing at sight would naturally lead to scanty knowledge of its appearance and habits ; so we have merely :

Another best there is, of eovel kynde,
Griseliche hit is, after theo feonde.
He schal sterve anon ryght,
That hit may on have a syght.
Catathleba is hire name :
God ows schilde al fro schame.²³

²¹ G.C.A. iii ; 2599-616.

²² L. of A. 7093-100.

²³ L. of A. 6560-5.

CENTAURS

See Classical.

CESSUS

The Cessus, too, like the Catathleba, might perhaps be identified with the bison ; but, as we find separate descriptions of the two given in Solinus, we must be cautious in making any decision on the point :

A best in the lond y-cleped Cessus.
Horned hit is, as an oxce :
Berd hit hadde long y-waxe.
Hit hath monnes feet byhynde ;
And his feet to-fore, so Y fynde,
Buth yliche monnes hond.
Hit nedeth nothyng to wond.
Hit is a best founde in boke
Wel griseliche on to loke.²⁴

CRABS

These monster decapods were other creatures found by Alexander :

Of wonder bestes many thousynde,
Crabben hy oten as I fynde.
Hy weren as mychel as bores ;
Thoo was that folk agrised sores.
Twelue feet hadden eueryche,
And als the deucl hy weren griseliche.

(Alexander's men laid on)
Ac hy ne mightten hem hirt verrayment
Ne with swerd, ne with dent :
(but slew them with fire-brands).²⁵

DEUTYRAUNS

These are hard to identify ; but, after reading the second line of the description, we should not be unduly surprised at any difficulty we may experience in recognising the original :

²⁴ L. of A. 6519-27.

²⁵ L. of A. 5366-71, 5377-8.

Thor comen there dasshyng bestes ferlich ;
 Man ne saugh neuere none swich.
 Hy ben y-hote deutyrauns ;
 More hy ben than olyfaunz.
 Blake heueded after a palfray ;
 Ac in the foreheuede, *par ma fay*,
 Hy have thre hornes sharp and longe ;
 And als a stede hy ben stronge.²⁶

DRAGONS

Very much might be set down about the tradition of the dragon in England and in Europe ; but for the present purpose it must suffice to say that a clear impression of the appearance of the creature can be gained from reading the passages in Middle-English verse which deal with it, and with the brave combats of our national heroes who fought with them and either overcame them or fell in the fight.

ELFAYDES

The elfayde depends for its claim to existence upon a single passage in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* :

(Arthur's men plunder the Roman camp ;)
 Thay kaire to þe karyage, and tuke whate them likes,
 Kamelles and sekadrisses, and cofirs fulle riche,
 Hekes and hakkenays, and horses of armes,
 Howsyng and herbergage of heythene kynges ;
 They drewe owt of dromondaries dyverse lordes,
 Moyllez mylke whitte, and mervailous bestez,
 Elfaydes, and Arrabys, and olyfauntez noble.²⁷

GRIFFIN

This creature is far better known than the last-named, and a good deal of attention was paid to it in Middle-English verse. Its character was unpleasant ; Herod is compared to a gripe :

þat gredi gerard als a gripe,
 and in the Complaint of the Ploughman it is classed with the Raven as typical of a bird that is given to cruelty and oppression,

²⁶ L. of A. 5414-21.

²⁷ *Morte Arthure*, 2282-8.

and opposed to the Phoenix and the Pelican, that range themselves on the side of justice. It is described thus :

“ The hinder part is a lioun,
 “ A robber and a ravinere,
 “ That robbeth the people in earth doune,
 “ And in earth holdeth none his pere ;
 “ So fareth this foule both ferre and nere.” ²⁸

HARPIES

See Classical.

HYDRA

See Classical.

ASTONI

See Whale.

MANTICORA

See Tiger.

MERMAIDS

See Classical.

MINOTAUR

See Classical.

MONOCEROS

See Rhinoceros.

Isidore of Seville says of the Rhinoceros :

Idem et monoceros, id est, unicornis . . . ²⁹

PHOENIX

See further.

UNICORN

See further.

²⁸ *Cursor Mundi*, 11811. *Political Poems and Songs*, p. 344, 9-13.

²⁹ Isidore of Seville, ii, 12.

(*To be continued*)



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Animal Beliefs (Continued)

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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

(*continued from Vol. LI, p. 112*)

BIRDS

Many passages in the verse we are considering refer to birds generally, and in some poems we meet with lists, in which some epithet tells us of the reputation which the birds named formerly enjoyed. Chaucer's list of the birds that attended the Parlement of Foules on Saint Valentine's day to choose their mates is an important contribution to our knowledge of the characteristics attributed to many of our British birds by our forefathers. Speaking of the assembly, Chaucer wrote :

Ther mighte men the royal egle finde,
That with his sharpe look perceth the sonne ;
And other egles of a lower kinde,
Of which that clerkes wel devisen conne.
Ther was the tyraunt with his fethres donne
And greye, I mene the goshawk, that doth pyne
To briddes for his outrageous ravyne.

The gentil faucon, that with his feet distreyneth
The kinges hond ; the hardy sperhawk eke,
The quayles foo ; the merlion that peyneth
Him-self ful ofte, the larke for to seke ;
Ther was the douve, with hir eyen meke ;
The jalous swan, ayens his deth that singeth ;
The oule eek, that of dethe the bode bringeth ;

The crane the geaunt, with his trompes soun ;
The theef, the chogh ; and eek the jangling pye ;
The scorning jay ; the eles foo, the heroun ;
The false lapwing, ful of trecherye ;

The stare, that the counseyl can bewrye ;
 The tame ruddok ; and the coward kyte ;
 The cok, that orloge is of thorpes lyte ;
 The sparrow, Venus sone ; the nightingale,
 That clepeth forth the fresshe leves newe ;
 The swallow, mordrer of the flyes smale
 That maken hony of floures fresshe of hewe ;
 The wedded turtel, with hir herte trewe ;
 The pecok, with his aungels fethres brighte ;
 The fesaunt, scorner of the cok by nighte ;
 The waker goos ; the cukkow ever unkinde ;
 The popinjay, ful of delicasye ;
 The drake, stroyer of his owne kinde ;
 The stork, the wreker of avouterye ;
 The hote cormeraunt of glotonye ;
 The raven wys, the crow with vois of care ;
 The throstel olde ; the frosty feldefare.³⁰

Chaucer has already told us how the fowls were arranged in order of rank—the fowls of ravine in the highest place ; then the worm-fowl ; then the water-fowl in the lowest rank, with the seed-fowl : an order which is instructive as to the consideration paid to the hunting habits of one class, more highly thought of than the plant—and fruit-eating propensities of the lower class of birds.

Other writers introduce into their poems shorter lists of birds ; the author of the *Romaunt of the Rose* has the following :

Than doth the nightingale hir might
 To make noyse, and singen blythe.
 Than is blisful, many a sythe,
 The chelaundre and the papingay.

In many places were nightingales,
 Alpes, finches, and wodewales,
 That in her swete song delyten
 In thilke place as they habytten.

Ther mighte men see many flokkes
 Of turtles and (of) laverokkes.
 Chalaundres fele saw I there,
 That wery, nigh forsongen were.
 And thrustles, terins, and mavys,
 That songen for to winne hem prys,

with this, in the description of Cupide :

But nightingales, a ful gret route,
 That flyen over his heed aboute,
 The leves felden as they flyen ;
 And he was al with briddes wryen,
 With popinjay, with nightingale,
 With chalaundre, and with wodewale,
 With finch, with lark, and with archaungel.

There seems to be a certain amount of confusion in the two last lists, as laverocks and chalaundres both appear to mean larks, and thrustles and mavys are different names for the thrush, while both wodewales and popinjays may stand for the green woodpecker. The mention of song may incline us to believe that the golden oriole, which is an alternative suggestion for the wodewale, is here intended. In spite of this confusion, the naming of the terin and the archangel, the siskin and the titmouse, marks the writer as a lover of birds, and the connection with Cupid of those he names strengthens this impression.³¹

One more poet, the author of *Winner and Waster*, shows an interest in birds ; we have already quoted one of his lists, which included several kinds of birds used as food ; but his interest was not confined to their edible qualities, as the passage which follows indicates that he had a genuine delight in observing them in their natural haunts :

The throstills full throly they threpe(d) to-gedire ;
 Hipped vp heghwalles fro heselis tyll othire ;
 Bernacles with thayre billes one barkes pay roungen ;
 P^e jay janglede one heghe, jarmede the foles.³²

³¹ R. of R. 78-81. 657-66. 999-15

³² W. & W. 37-40

On turning to the lives of the saints, however, we find that first-hand observance of the habits, and the distinction of species, are far less prominent; though even in these tales there are exceptions, as in the record of the larks singing all night on the death of St. Francis:

he deide . . .

. . . on a satur-day at night.

þe sonendai he was i-bured—he ne ferde nouȝt ase þis riche
þat for bobaunt of þe world:ligge thþ longue a-liche.
þo þis holie man was ded—:þei it were bi nighte,
A gret hep of lauerkene:opon þe church a-lizhte
And murie sounguen al þe longue night:a-boute þe bodie þere,
þo þe soule to heouene wende:azein kuynde þei it were—
For þe lauerke is a foul:þat mucche louez light
And herethþ pane dai with hire song:and restez hire a-night.

Other passages referring to this saint's love of birds and power over them are:

Ase seint Fraunceis þis holie man:ouer lond ofte him drouȝ,
Wilde foules, smale and grete:honoureden him i-novȝ.
For ase he wende in atyme:to prechie ouer lond,
An hep of foules grete i-novȝ:In a stude he fond;
huy songuen and maden noyse i-nov:euerech in is wise;
þe ȝuyt þe holie man a-mong heom cam:huy nolden nouȝt enes
arise.

þo maden þis foules so gret noise:þat huy ne mizhten noþing
i-here.

“Sostrene,” quath þis holie Man: . . .

Beothþ noupe stille and lathþ me segge:mine tidene with mi
frere.

þis foules a-non-right to is heste:stille weren al-so.

Swipe gret pouwer he hadde of god: þat foules weren at is hestel
þis holie man wende him forthto prechi ouer lond:

A gret hep eft-sonne of foules:in on oþur stude he fond.
 . . . þis foules bi-gonne echon
 Louten to him wel mildeliche. . .

. . . þis foules he gan to preche :

. . . þere nolde a-rise nouȝt on,
 Are he wolde bidden heom wende forth: . . . ³³

Though St. Francis was eminent in his love for birds, he was not the only saint who exercised a special power over animals ; and we read of St. Martin :

Foules duden is heste al-so:for on a time ase he gan gon,
 he saizh douedoppene fishes cachche:and swolewen heom in a-non.
 " Alas! " seide þis guode man: " þis is þe feondes manere :
 Gultlese þingus and vnwarre:to cachchen, ase huy doth here,
 And þing þat non harm ne doth:bote wenþ in pay(s) to beo ;
 So farez þe deuel, a-waytez euere: for-to he is preize i-seo."
 he het þe foules a-godes name:ech-one þannes teo
 And þat huy scholden in-to wildernesse:out of þat watere fleo,
 þat huy neueref(t) þare ne comen:gultlese þingus to take.
 þis foules a-non with þis word:awei huy gonne schake.³⁴

Special mention of birds also occurs in the lives of Saints Brendan and Kenelm ; in the former, a little white fowl, which was transformed into that shape each Sunday, appeared to the saint and his companions ; later in the story, a little bird brought the travellers food. In the life of St. Kenelm, the saint dreamed that he was turned into a fowl, and the nurse explains that the fowl was his soul.³⁵

In the narratives many instances are to be found of birds speaking ; in the case of St. Brendan this is admitted to be contrary to their nature :

þeȝ hit þoȝte aȝe cunde:þis fowel ansuerede anon :

³³ E.S.E.L. xviii, 250-9, 328-33, 338-9, 342, 347-51, 353, 367-8.

³⁴ E.S.E.L. lxiv. 126-35.

³⁵ E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 180-91, etc. ; xlix. 124-8, etc.

"We were," he seide, "sum-tyme was:angles in heuene echon." ³⁶

In the legend of *Sir Ysumbras* God sends a message to the knight in a dream by the mouth of a bird; in *Barlaam and Josaphat*, a small bird tells how there is inside him a rich stone of great virtue. Again, in the *Life of Alisaunder*, when dissension arose about the place where Alexander was to be buried, the question was solved by the appearance of a bird, which spoke to the barons assembled, naming the appointed spot. ³⁷

But the folklore of this matter is carried much farther in the *Squieres Tale*. Among the wonders produced by the stranger knight, there is a ring, the wearer of which will be able to understand birds' language. A good portion of the tale dwells on the use made by Canacee of this magic ring.

The vertu of the ring, if ye wol here,
Is this; that if hir lust it for to were
Up-on hir thombe, or in hir purs it bere,
Ther is no foul that fleeth under the hevene
That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene,
And knowe his mening openly and pleyn,
And answeere him in his langage ageyn. ³⁸

Proverbs and similes still remain to be considered; this proverb, from the Vernon MS., has survived to the present day:

I holde þat Brid mucche to blame
þat defouleth his oune nest;

here is another, from Gower:

And takth the bridd to his beyete,
Wher othre men the buissches bete.

A second proverb from Gower runs:

What he mai gete of his nichinge,
It is al bile under the winge.

³⁶ E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 195-6.

³⁷ *Sir Ysumbras*, 36. 41-8. *Barlaam and Josaphat*, 402 ff. L. of A. 7996-8002.

³⁸ Ch-CTF. 146-52.

This is explained by Skeat : What he can get by his thieving is . . . carefully hidden, like a bird's bill under its wing.³⁹

The references to the song of birds that we have been considering might lead us to suppose that similes in which birds are introduced would contain most often allusions to their powers of singing ; we find, however, that freedom of flight is a frequent theme ; in *Sir Ferumbras* we have :

... , Prykyng so dop þe foul on flyzt,
elsewhere,
And rideth swithe, so foul may fleon,
and

Wel arayed so foul to flyghte.

þei were also fous to fízt,
As euere was a foul to flízt ;

... als lyght,
Als a fowl es to the flyght,

þarfor þai swippe þurgh purgatory
Als a foul þat flyes smertly.

Other similes are " as glad ther-of as fowel of day " ; which is given us by Chaucer, and occurs in other forms in other authors :

" We buth here, so foule in treo " :

" And buth byset, so foul in cage " :

And, as meke as bryd yn kage ;

Perist was als fuwl in lime.⁴⁰

³⁹ Vernon MS. Iv (16), 73-4. G.C.A. ii. 2355-6 ; v. 6525-6. Skeat, *Early English Proverbs*, 134.

⁴⁰ *Sir Ferumbras*, 4232. *L. of A.* 1982, 2524. *Otuel*, 1673-4. *Ywaine & Gawin*, 1303-4. *Pricke of Conscience*, 3322-3. Ch-CTB. 1228. *L. of A.* 3551, 3555. *Handlyng Synne*, 4004. C.Mi. 29082.



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Animal Beliefs (Continued)

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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

(continued from Vol. LI, p. 178)

FISH

Passages occur where fish are mentioned without any particular variety being named. One of these reports King Arthur's talk with Howel about the wonders of a Scottish lake. There is in Scotland a pool, dug by the elves, small, four-cornered, with four kinds of fish in it. Each kind in the pool keeps its own place, and never swims to that of another. No man born, however wise, can understand what hinders the fish from passing to the place of another kind, for there is nought between them but pure water.⁴¹

In the legends we find that two fish, one evil and one good, came to St. Brendan's boat. The first threatened the ship with burning foam, but was overcome and destroyed by the second. We read, too, that at another time, some fish gathered round the boat, to hear the saint sing Mass, each fish going to its own place afterwards. Much wonder may a man see, that will travel wide!⁴²

The legend of Pope Gregory tells how a fisherman caught three fish, in one of which was found a key that had been thrown before into the sea.⁴³

In King Arthur's dream in the *Brut*, we are told that a fish came and carried the king to land, after he had been taken out to sea by a lion. Later in the same chronicle we meet with Pelluz, who knew the history of the fish that swim.⁴⁴

⁴¹ L.B. 21989-22012.

⁴² E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 408-11, and 416-9; 460-3.

⁴³ *Leg. of Pope Gregory*, p. 66, 1-3.

⁴⁴ L.B. 28078-83, 30497-500.

There seems to have been some doubt in the minds of the writers of the fourteenth century, when they told the story of the Deluge, as to what happened to the fish. The earliest text of *Piers Plowman* says :

Alle schulen dye for his dedes·Bi Dounes and hulles,
Boþe Fisch and Foules·forþ wiþ oþer beestes,
Out-taken Eihte soules·

but in the later versions there is no mention of fish. This is not the only passage of the sort, for a more skilled poet wrote of the dispersion from the ark, that the fish betook themselves :

Vche fysch to þe flod þat fynne couþe nayte,

An idea about fishes, which may possibly have some connection with a feeling that, if they escaped punishment in the flood, they must have been innocent in their lives, comes to light in this passage :

Þow madest fisch ase wel alse man,
þat noþing of senne ne can,
Ne nouȝt of fisches kenne
Neuer ȝet ne dede senne.

To fisch, þat neuer senne dede.

In the same way St. Martin, seeing divers catching fish, rebuked the birds, and spoke of the fish, as we have seen, as :

Gultlese þingus and vnwarre:to cachchen, ase huy doth here,
And þing þat non harm ne doth:bote wenth in pay(s) to beo.⁴⁵

Among the fifteen tokens of doomsday, that of the fourth day is concerned with fishes :

Þe fierth day, sal swilk a wonder be,
Þe mast wondreful fisshes·of þe se

⁴⁵ P.P.-A., x. 167-9; B. ix. 138-40; C. xi. 229-31. Clan. 531. *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, A. 1799-802, 1808. E.S.E.L. lxiv. 129-30.

Sal com to-gyder and mak swilk romyng
pat it sal be hydus til mans heryng.⁴⁶

A general belief that the growth of shell-fish depends on the waxing and waning of the moon is touched on :

Benethe alle othre stant the Mone,
The which hath with the See to done :
Of flodes hihe and ebbes lowe
Upon his change it schal be knowe ;
And every fissh which hath a schelle
Mot in his governance duelle,
To wexe and wane in his degre,
As be the Mone a man mai se.⁴⁷

When we come to other remarkable stories about fish, we find that there were said to be fishes 300 feet long in the Ganges ; in one passage they are not named, while in another they are said to be eels :

In Ynde is a water y-hote Ganges ;
There ben jnne fysshes of strengthe,
Thre hundreth feet hy ben of lengthe.

The same poem tells of the under-sea haunts of fish :

Theo kyng was of hardy blod
With heom he wente undur the flod.
He say the ekeris wonynge,
And the fysches lotynge.

In another poem, after Charlemagne's curse, we read :

& per pe oper pre cites stode,
Beþ waters red of helle flode,
& fisches ther in al blo ;
& who þat wil nougt leue me,
In spaine men may pe soþe y-se,
Who þat wil þider go.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ P. of C. 4770-3.

⁴⁷ G.C.A. vii. 721-8.

⁴⁸ L. of A. 4853-5, 6200-3. *Rouland & Vernagu*, 299-304.

The eating of raw fish is mentioned in two places among travellers' tales, and in the legend of St. Michael, when a woman and her child were left for a year beneath the sea,

For þei heo hadde fisch and drinke : 3e wuten wel it was rav3.
Proverbial expressions occur :

Fyve cheynes I haue-& þey ben fysh hole.

And als þe fisch right wit þe bait
apon þe hok es tan.

þs he was take w^t þe fysch,;þ^t he þou3t take w^t crok.

and two similes are worth recording :
the fish that

... cam wolchi after ase an hous :

and that of the people, of whom it is written :

Her honden, withouten gabbe,
Ben y-shuldred as an fysshe.⁴⁹

ADDERS

For our present purpose all kinds of snakes and serpents can be included under this title. The word adder was used in Middle-English for various kinds of reptiles, though not to the exclusion of the word serpent. The latter occurs in many cases where our English writer is borrowing his story from classical or romance stories. Latin and Greek authors describe under varying names many sorts of reptiles.

Several tales in Middle-English verse introduce serpents, thus the *Maunciple's Tale* tells of Phoebus :

He slow Phitoun, the serpent, as he lay
Slepinge agayn the sonne upon a day.

⁴⁹ L. of A. 4938-9, 5774. E.S.E.L. xlv. 152. *Chevelere Assigne*, 353. C.Mi. 16931-2. B. & J. 1172. E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 411. L. of A. 4967-8.

Gower and Chaucer both refer to the story of Cleopatra; the former has :

Cleopatras, which in a Cave
With Serpentz hath himself begrave
Alquik, and so sche was totore,

while Chaucer tells :

And next the shryne a pit than doth she grave ;
And alle the serpents that she mighte have,
She putte hem in that grave, . . .

In another place Gower gives the history of Tarquin and how the "hidous Serpent" came out from under the altar and devoured the sacrifice, giving thereby an omen that the offering was not accepted. The serpent, called in some places the Dragon, plays an important part in the story of Jason and Medea, and kept the Golden Fleece; twice it is called sleepless :

A Serpent, which mai nevere slepe.

and

. . . that Serpent which nevere slepte.

We read, too, how Medea

Al specheles and on the gras
Sche glod forth as an Addre doth.⁵⁰

Reference has already been made (see Classical) to the story of the slaying of Phitoun, to the dragon in the myth of Jason and Medea, to the Medusa, and to Hercules and Achelous. Further mention of the serpent, as connected with the Devil and the Dragon of Hell, is to be found in the Destruction of Troy, in William of Shoreham's works, in the *Early South English Legendary*, and in the *Azenbite of Inwyt*.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ch-CTH. 108-9. G.C.A. viii. 2573-5. Ch-Leg. 678-80. G.C.A. vii. 4710; v. 3514, 6607, 3966-7.

⁵¹ D. of T. 4451-6. *William of Shoreham*, iv. 85-94; vii. 637-9. E.S.E.L. xviii. 291-5. A 3. of I., p. 171, 30-2; p. 203, 17-8.

Coming now to the powers and qualities of the Adder, we may begin with two traits, of which the *Bestiary* tells. The first deals with the sloughing of the skin : The serpent renews himself thus : he fasts ten days till his skin is loose ; he seeks a stone pierced with a hole ; he creeps through and leaves his skin ; goes to the water, having first spued out all his venom ; drinks, and thus renews himself. Such is the account of the *Bestiary*, and throughout the Middle Ages we may believe that the renewal of the adder was thus envisaged. We find further that the skin of the adder was thought to be a protection against sword-strokes ; in *Sir Ferumbas* we find :

Ac for þat strok had he non hoze For he was panne to-be
toze
body & heued y-same
With an hard crested serpentis fel, On which non eged tol ne
may no del
With no strok entame.

Possibly the toughness may account for the use of serpent's skin by Medea in the preparation of the medicine for rejuvenating Aeson. The hardness of the dragon's skin is given as the reason for the difficulty that Jason had in destroying the beast :

He mihte nocht that Serpent dere.
He was so scherded al aboute,
It hield all eggetol withoute,
He was so ruide and hard of skin,
Ther mihte nothing go therin.

Although it may have no direct bearing upon the quality of toughness, it may be worthy of note that Pliny tells us that the slough of the serpent destroys moth.⁵²

The second statement of the *Bestiary* is to the effect that, when the adder is stripped of his slough and bare of poison, if he sees a naked man, he will not come near him, but flees as from fire. If he sees a clothed man, bold he waxes, sets himself

⁵² *Bestiary*, 120-43, 144-64. Sir F., 4539-42. G.C.A. v. 3706-10 Pliny, Bk. xxix, 32.

upright, ready to harm or kill, if he may. The man must fight the adder.

But there were other and stranger tales told of this reptile in the Middle Ages. We know from Scripture of the deaf adder, which stoppeth her ears, and heareth not the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely: but the way in which it does this may not be known to all. The prose *Azenbite of Inweyt* reveals to us that it "stoppeþ þet on eare mid erpe and þet oþer mid hare tayle þet hi ne yhere þane charmere." It is likely that the writer was acquainted, directly or indirectly, with the works of Isidore of Seville, who makes the same statement. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that Isidore also states that in Arabia are winged serpents called "sirenae" which run faster than horses; this assertion is repeated in the *Azenbite*.⁵³

The tail, we are told in the *Handlyng Synne*, holds the venom:

þe nedder makeþ þe semblant mylde,
And yn hys tayle ys venym wylde;

this does not agree with what we read in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*:

Doun fel þe nadder, wiþ outen faile,
And smot so Beues wiþ þe taile,

after the manner of a dragon, which generally pours its venom from its throat.⁵⁴

Poison, indeed, is the attribute most frequently mentioned. The *Life of Alisaunder*, the *Cursor Mundi*, *Handlyng Synne*, which we have already quoted, Gower in the tale of Jason and Medea, William of Shoreham, the *Political Poems and Songs*, the *Destruction of Troy*, as well as the prose *Azenbite*, all bear witness to the poisonous properties of the creature.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ps. LVIII, vv. 4-5. A3. of I., p. 257, 19-22 (cf. G.C.A. i. 461-80). I. of S., iv. 12; iv. 29. A3. of I., p. 61, 8-33.

⁵⁴ H.S. 4171-2. B. of H., A. 1559-60.

⁵⁵ L. of A. 5611; C.Mi. 12539-42. H.S. 4169-72. G.C.A. v. 3711. William of S., iv. 85-8. P.P. & S., p. 392, 9. D. of T., 925-9. A3. of I., p. 61, 8-33.

Our attention has already been drawn to the use of adders as food, and this we can accept without question, but more wonderful tales remain, for the serpents of Middle-English verse had the curious property of producing precious stones. The *Life of Alisaunder* assures us of this, and goes so far as to give us the names of the stones so produced :

Jacynkte, piropes, crisolites,
Safyres, smaragdes, and margarites.

Gower tells that it is of the nature of the "Aspidis,"

That he the Ston noblest of alle,
The which that men Carbuncle calle,
Berth in his hed above on heihte.

and relates how a snake gives a stone which has the magic property of returning to the purse of the owner every time it is sold. Yet, in one case at least, according to the author of the *Destruction of Troy*, Jason's dragon was subdued by the sight of the stone in the ring given him by Medea.⁵⁶

Of similes and epithets we meet with several ; the Marchantes Tale has :

O servant traitour, false hoomly hewe,
Lyk to the naddre in bosom sly untrew,

and the Squieres Tale :

Right as a serpent hit him under floures
Til he may seen his tyme for to byte,

later, in the *Destruction of Troy*, the following reference to the *Life of St. Brendan* occurs :

Ane loke of lyuyaton in the lyffe of saynt Brandon,
There pis warløghe, I wis, a water eddur is cald.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ L. of A. 5682-3. G.C.A. i. 465-7 ; v. 5060-III.

⁵⁷ Ch-CTE. 1785-6. CTF. 512-3. D. of T. 4438-9.

ANT

The ant figures in the *Bestiary*, which tells us that the 'mire' is mighty; toils much in summer and in soft weather; stores wood and seed, corn and grass; in winter she is not harmed: she likes wheat, but shuns barley like shame: she bites in two the corn she stores, so that it shall not grow. We can find authority for the statement about wheat in Isidore of Seville, who says that it chooses wheat, but does not touch barley; and for that about biting in two the stored grains in Pliny, who says incorrectly that the grains are gnawed. After this record in the *Bestiary*, it is somewhat disappointing to find but little in later writers. Our Middle-English verse does not confirm what we have seen in the earlier natural history; we only find a story of ants, poisonous and larger than greyhounds:

Yet ther beon emoten, so Y fynde,
That beon more than grehoundis,
No mon no may heom anoye,
Bote he wol anon ryght dye.

Chaucer compares an ant with an angry man:

He is as angry as a pissemyre,

and for the Myrmidons, changed from ants into men, see the section "Classical."⁵⁸

APES AND BABOONS

Apart from the Classical tale of the transformations wrought by Circe and Calypso on the companions of Ulysses, we have in the Somnours Tale the question whether fiends in hell have a "determinat" figure, and the answer that sometimes they seem like a man, sometimes like an ape.

In the *Romaunt of the Rose* we get a proverb:

Make I not wel tumble myn apes?

⁵⁸ Best. 234-72. I. of S. iii. 9. Pliny, Bk. xi. 36. L. of A. 6566-9. Ch-CTD. 1825. D. of T. 111-2.

and in Chaucer a proverbial expression :

Right as him liste, the preest he made his ape.

We find, too, some similes :

As piled as an ape was his skulle.

“ He schal beo kytted soo an ape.”

Visage after martyn apen ;

and the following references in the prose of the period :
ape resouns ;

the sinne of japeres, that been the develes apes.

Baboons are mentioned in the description in Clannesse of Belshazzar's feast.⁵⁹

ASS

The story of Christ's birth in the *Pricke of Conscience* contains the line :

In a cribbe, bytween an ox and an asse ;

and Clannesse, referring to the same event, has :

Penne watz her blyþe barne burnyst so clene,
þat boþe þe ox & þe asse hym hered at-ones.

Proverbs and similes are found in Gower and Chaucer :

For al schal deie and al schal passe,
Als well a Leoun as an asse,
Als wel a beggere as a lord.

⁵⁹ Ch-CTD. 1458-64. R. of R. 6836. Ch-CTG. 1313. CTA. 3935. L. of A. 4344, 6464. *English Wks. of Wyclif*, p. 412, 9-11. Ch-CTI. 650-1. Clan. 1409.

Artow lyke an asse to the harpe?

And yif he be slow and astoned and lache, he
liveth as an asse.⁶⁰

BADGER

A common belief about this animal is recorded in *Ywaine and Gawin* :

It es ful semeli, als me think,
A brok omang men forto stynk.

In Clannesse we read that during the flood :

Bukkeȝ, bauseneȝ & buleȝ to þe bonkkeȝ hyȝed.

Lazamon tells us in the *Brut* that men hid themselves like brocks; while the *Life of Beket* mentions among the knights that came to Dover before the murder of Beket "sire Randolf þe brok"; this last reference being probably of a heraldic nature.⁶¹

BARNACLES

The barnacle goose has already been recorded in the "Food" section of this study as a customary dish served at feasts in the Middle Ages; but it is not clear that the same bird is referred to in the passage in *Winner and Waster* which mentions barnacles as making a ringing noise on the bark of trees with their bills; surely some smaller bird is intended here.⁶²

BASILISK

See Beasts.

⁶⁰ P. of C. 5200. Clan. 1085-6. G.C.A. i. 2247-9. Ch-Boe. Bk. i, P. 4, 3; Bk. iv. P. 3, 131-2.

⁶¹ Y. & G. 97-8. Clan. 392. L.B. 12815-7. E.S.E.L. xxvii, 1797.

⁶² W. & W. 37-40.

BAT

Pliny tells us that a bat carried round the house three times, then nailed outside the window, head downwards, acts as a charm, and that its heart is a remedy for venomous ants. We find no mention of these uses in the verse we are considering, but in *Political Songs and Poems* there is a reference to its nocturnal habits, connecting it with the idea of extravagance :

And to rewle as reremys,
and rest on þe daies,
and spende of þe spicerie
more than it nedid.⁶³

BEAR

The tales from classical sources have been dealt with ; another from *Handlyng Synne* tells of an animal coming to offer service in answer to prayer ; the hermit, to whom it presented itself, gave the bear charge of his sheep ; contrary to its nature, it kept the sheep well.⁶⁴

Malory, in his *Morte D'Arthur*, tells of a dream of King Arthur, how a boar came from the East, and a Dragon from the West, and fought together, till at last the dragon overcame the boar. In Lazamon's *Brut*, and in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the story is of a bear in place of a boar.⁶⁵

Bear-skins play an important part in the story of William of Palerne ; but in spite of a statement which runs :

William & þe mayde-þat were white beres,

the meaning seems to be that the two merely assumed the skins as a disguise ; not that they were actually transformed into bears. If some earlier version of the story existed at some time, it is quite possible that the mere clothing of themselves in the skin of an animal may, at that stage of development of human thought, have involved a metamorphosis with all its conse-

⁶³ Pliny, xxix. 26, 29, P.P.S. p. 406, 7-10.

⁶⁴ H.S. 4040-127.

⁶⁵ Malory, *M. D'Arthur*, Bk. V, c. 4. L.B. 25583-618.

quences, but as the tale runs in the fourteenth century, a contrast seems to be maintained between the fate of the Prince Alphonse, who was enchanted and could not put off the form of a werwolf, and the disguise voluntarily assumed by the young people; who, in fact, later in the story, changed their bear-skins for hart-skins, the better to effect their escape. Another example of the use of a bear-skin as a garment, though not as a disguise, is given in the *Knichtes Tale*: we read of Ligurge of Trace,

He hadde a beres skin, col-blak, for-old.⁶⁶

A passage in *Hauelok* seems to refer to the belief that a person of royal blood was immune from harm from the attacks of beasts:

þat him ne hauede grip or ern,
Leoun or wlf, wluine or bere,
Or oþer best, þat wolde him dere.

Though his royal birth is not expressly mentioned, the young Hauelok's security, while lying in a sack in Grim's cottage, waiting to be drowned, was probably thought to be due to this supposed recognition of royalty on the part of animals.⁶⁷

Chaucer gives us two proverbs: in *Troilus and Criseyde*—

For thus men seyn, "that oon thenketh the bere,
But al another thenketh his ledere."

and another in the *Persones Tale*:

Of which seith Salomon, 'Leon rorynge and bere hongry
been lyke to the cruel lordshipes'.⁶⁸

References to the custom of bear-baiting as a sport occur in *Hauelok*:

þey drowen ut swerdes, ful god won,
And shoten on him, so don on bere
Dogges, þat wolden him to-tere
þanne men doth þe bere beyte:

⁶⁶ *William of Palerne*, 1764. Ch-CTA. 2142.

⁶⁷ H. 572-4.

⁶⁸ Ch-T. and C. iv. 1453-4; CTI. 568.

in the *Complaint of the Ploughman* we find

As boistous as is beare at bay,

and

He shal be baighteth as a bere ;

and elsewhere :

Of liouns chas, of beore baityng,

and an allusion to armorial bearings in the poem *On the Deposition of Richard II* :

This is clergie hir kynde,
coltis (nat) to greve,
ne to hurle with haras,
ne hors well atamed,
ne to stryve with swan ;
thouȝ it sholle werre ;
ne to bayten on the bere ;
ne bynde him nother,

the references being to the heads of the families whose arms bore the images of the creatures named : also in the *Life of Becket* we have :

Sire Reynaud le fiz ours : pursiwede him anon.⁶⁹

Merlin's prophecy is found in *Songs on King Edward's Wars* :

Merlin said thus with his mowth,
Out of the north into the sowth
Suld cum a bare over the se,
That suld mak many man to fle ;
And in these, he said ful right,
Suld he schew ful mekill might ;
And in France he suld begin,
To mak tham wrath that er tharein,

⁶⁹ H. 1837-40. P.P.S. p. 307 ; 15, p. 323 ; 12. L. of A. 199. P.P.S. p. 392, 13-20. E.S.E.L. xxvii. 2077.

Untill the se his taile reche sale,
All folk of France to mekill bale.⁷⁰

The *Life of Alisaunder* introduces a simile—rough as a bear—

And wymmen as beres rowe ;

Rowgh they weore so a beore,

And rowgh so beore to the hond ;

and another simile in :

“ Men dredith him on uche an half,
So kalf the beore, or schep the wolf.”

And we find in *Of Arthour and of Merlin* :

The cristen fond the hethen dere
So the lioun doth the bere.

The note of colour affecting man in sleep is struck in the Nonne Preestes Tale :

Right as the humour of malencolye
Causeth ful many a man, in sleep, to crye,
For fere of blake beres, or boles blake,
Or elles, blake develes wole hem take.⁷¹

BEES

A story is told of King Richard, when he was on his crusade, ordering his men to fetch bee-hives.

Thai smiten tabours and trumpes blowe.

On the word of command they threw the bee-hives ; the bees stung the Saracens, who said :

“ King Richard is fell,
When his fleyzen bite so wel.”

⁷⁰ P.P.S. p. 75. 7-16.

⁷¹ L. of A. 5769, 6124, 6261, 1820-1 ; *Of Arthur and of Merlin*, 7527-8. Ch-CTB. 4123-6.

In Gower we find a proverb :

And thus, as I have seid aforȝ,
I licke hony on the thorn.

In the Second Nonnes Tale,

Lo, lyk a bisy bee, with-outen gyle,
Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile!

and Clannesse giveth us :

Hurled in-to helle-hole as þe hyue swarmeȝ. ⁷²

The old belief that the queen bee was a king, found in Pliny and in Isidore of Seville, is repeated in the Persones Tale :

And therfore thise flyes that men clepeth bees, whan they maken hir king, they chesen oon that hath no prikke wher-with he may stinge.⁷³

BITTERN

See Food.

In addition, Chaucer refers to this bird in the story of Midas, using a striking metaphor :

And, as a bitore bombleth in the myre,
She leyde hir mouth un-to the water doun :
“ Biwreye me nat, thou water with thy soun,”
Quod she, “ to thee I telle it, and namo.” ⁷⁴

BOAR, HOG, SOW

There are two legends concerning sows : One, that of St. Francis, who found one day a sow strangling a young lamb. The sow, on being cursed by the saint, fell sick, and died on the third day. No raven, pie, or other fowl, would come near the carcase.⁷⁵

⁷² *King Richard*, 295, 307-8. G.C.A. vi. 927-8. Ch-CTG. 195-6. *Clan.* 223.

⁷³ Pliny, xi. 10, etc. I. of S. viii. 1. Ch-CTI. 468.

⁷⁴ Ch-CTD. 972-5.

⁷⁵ E.S.E.L. xviii. 302-13.

In the other tale the sow is the victim. A poor woman, owning one sow, called upon St. Blase to rescue it from the wolf that had made off with it. On the saint's order, the wolf brought back the sow, all unharmed.⁷⁶

The tale of Circe has been already mentioned in the section on Classical tales. To this should be added the story of Cassandra's explanation of Troilus' dreams :

This boor he slow, and hir the heed he sente.

And of this lord descended Tydeus
By ligne.⁷⁷

Boar-baiting was one of the sports in the festivities which celebrated the dubbing of Hauelok as knight and his instalment as king :

Ʒer mouhte men se Ʒe boles beyte,
And Ʒe bores, with hundes teyte.

Again we read :

And bay of bor, of bole slatyng.⁷⁸

Examples occur of the use of the boar's head upon the shields of knights. Thus, Sire Degarre meets a knight :

With the scheld of asur,
And thre bore heuedes ther in,
Wel i-painted with gold fin.

So on the pensel of Cleodalis : azure

Of gold ther were four bor heuedes y-bete.

In the description of Sir Thopas :

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,
And ther-in was a bores heed,
A charbocle bisyde.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ E.S.E.L. lxxiii. 49-58.

⁷⁷ Ch-T. & C., v. 1477, 1480-1.

⁷⁸ H. 2330-1. L. of A. 200.

⁷⁹ *Sire Degarre*, 995-7. A. & M. 5653. Ch-CTB. 2059-61.

The Prologue of the Wife of Bath records a proverb :

“ A fair womman, but she be chaast also,
Is lyk a gold ring in a sowes nose.”

and an expression in *Guy of Warwick* is also proverbial :

Þou sest Mahoun ne Apolin
Be nouzt worp þe brestel of a swin.

In *Melibeus* we have :

“ a litel thorn may prikke a greet king ful sore ; and an
hound wol holde the wilde boor ” ;

the *Azenbite of Inwyt* tells that the farrowed sow well blithely
bites men clothed in white.⁸⁰

Epithets and similes referring to the boar are numerous :
“ wild ” is used in the *Brut* and by Chaucer : “ bold,” “ brim ”
and “ brust ” are found : he is spoken of as “ rough ”, “ en-
raged ” ; we meet with expressions such as—“ he had boar’s
glances ” ; “ gnashed as a boar ” ; “ mychel as boars ” ;
“ bristled as hogs ” ; “ the foule sowe ” ; and, this last in *Otuel* :

Þat pere he lay as a stiked swin.⁸¹

BUCEPHALUS

See Classical.

BULFINCH

See Food.

⁸⁰ Ch-CTD. 784-5. G. of W. 3679-80. Ch-CTB. 2516. A3. of I.,
p. 61, 29-30.

⁸¹ L.B. 1697, 7503, 16094, etc. Ch-CTA. 1658, etc. V. MS. liii. 226.
C.Mi. 4899. Sir F., 545. *Political Songs of England*, p. 151-15. L. of
A. 6368. L.B. 1696, 21261, 22281. L. of A. 5368, 5770. Ch-Boe. iv.
p. 3, 135-7. *Otuel*, 1502.

(to be continued)



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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

(continued from Vol. LI, p. 276)

BULL, OX, COW, CALF

In addition to the tales already quoted from classical sources, which introduce bulls, mention may be made of those in the story of the golden fleece :

But hit was kept alway with a dragoun,
And many othere merveils, up and down,
And with two boles, maked al of bras,
That spitten fyr, and moche thing ther was.

and in the Knightes Tale, we find, of Ligurge of Trace :

Ful hye up-on a char of gold stood he,
With foure whyte boles in the trays.⁸²

In the sacred story we have already found mention of the ox in the *Pricke of Conscience* and *Clannesse*, while the prophecy, attributed to Jeremiah, is recorded in *Cursor Mundi* :

“ Wolf and wether, leon and ox,
Sal comen samen, and lamb and fox.”⁸³

Among the legends of the saints, that of St. James relates how, after the destruction of a dragon :

Ʒe Bollokes and Ʒe ʒoungue steores: Ʒat weren er so wilde,
Anon so huy touward heom come:huy woxen tame and milde.

⁸² Ch-Leg. 1430-3. CTA. 2138-9.

⁸³ P. of C. 5200. Clan. 1085-6. C.Mi. 11649-50.

Þe beste huy chosen þat huy wolden:and to þe wayne heom
ladde ;

And huy drowen þat bodi so mildeliche:þat ech man þarof
wonder hadde.

St. Brigit's story tells of the wonderful yield of milk of a single cow, which was enough to supply food for the bishop and all his men. St. Kenelm's legend speaks of a cow that gave so much milk while remaining still in one place that men understood that it was a token. The meaning was disclosed one day :

Ase þe pope stød at rome:in his masse a day
At seint peteres weouede:ase muche folk þat i-sai,
A coluere, 3wigt so ani snov:cam fram heouene fleo
And leide on þe weuede a luyte writ:and sethþe azen gan steo,
He flev3 op into heouene an heiz:ase ore louerd it wolde.
Þat writ was 3wigt and schon wel brizte:þe lettres weren of
golde.

And for-to tellen with-oute ryme:þeos wordes it were :

" In klent covbache kenelm, kyngues sone. lijth onder ane
þorne,

is heued him bi-reued."

One more legend, that of St. Martin, tells how the saint healed a cow, on the back of which he saw the devil riding; the cow :

... to is fet heo feol a-kneo a-non,
And schok hire heued, to þonki him : ...⁸⁴

The custom of bull-baiting is mentioned in *Hauelok* and in the *Life of Alisaunder*, as we have seen, and again :

He bunden him ful swiþe faste,
Hwil þe bondes wolden laste,
Þat he rorede als a bole,
Þat he wore parred in an hole,
With dogges forto bite and beite.

⁸⁴ E.S.E.L. xv. 182-5 ; xxxii. 29-36 ; xlix. 245-50, 260-1 ; lxiv. 162-3.

Bulls are coupled with bears and black devils as causing the night-mare dreams engendered by Melancholy.⁸⁵

Proverbial expressions connected with bulls and cows occur ; in the poem on the *Deposition of Richard II* :

Ffor it ffallith as wellle
to ffordis of xxiiij. 3eris
or yonge men of yistirday
to 3eve good redis,
as becometh a kow
to hoppe in a cage ;

in the *Life of Alisaunder* :

Men dredith him on uche an half,
So kalf the beore, or schep the wolf.

and in Chaucer :

A wys wyf, if that she can hir good,
Shal beren him on hond the cow is wood.

Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plogh,
Taken up-on me more than y-nogh ;

and in his prose :

Ovid seith : that " the litel wesele wol slee the grete bole and the wilde hert."

Handlyng Synne contains the following :

He ys no more crystyn man
þan who so kallyþ a blak oxe " swan." ⁸⁶

Among similes and comparisons we find the dragon's neck is said to be " greter þan a bole " ; a monster is spoken of :

He was ruggher than any ku,
And spaak als an helle bu ;

⁸⁵ H. 2330-1. L. of A. 200. H. 2436-40. Ch-CTB. 4125.

⁸⁶ P.P.S. p. 405, 19-24. L. of A. 1820-1. Ch-CTD. 231-2. CTA. 3159-60 ; CTB. 2515. H.S. 4319-20.

the Soul declares :

Ye led me
As men doþ ox bi þe horn.

He is to-hewe by fyve by sixe,
So the bocher doth the oxe ;

of the Cessus :

Horned hit is, as an oxce.⁸⁷

BUZZARD

The characteristics of the buzzard seem to have been currently pictured as blindness and cowardice, if we may judge by the following :

Nultow never late ne skete
A goshawk maken of a kete,
No faucon mak of busard
No hardy knyght mak of coward.

That man (ne) may, for no daunting,
Make a sperhauke of a bosarde.

I rede eche a blynde bosarde:do bote to hym-selue.⁸⁸

CAMEL

While the use of the camel as a beast of burden is mentioned in *Cursor Mundi* :

Pair camels charged all wit sede,
we read of a people who, by contrast, evidently represent a lower degree of culture :

They both long, and blak, and lokith as an houle.
They no haveth camayle, no olifaunt,
No kow, no hors, avenaunt,
On hond they creoputh, at o word.

⁸⁷ G. of W. 7157. L. of A. 5956-7. *Desputisoun*, p. 21, 13-4. L. of A. 2831-2, 6520.

⁸⁸ L. of A. 3047-50. R. of R. 4032-3. P.P. B x, 266.

Chaucer gives us :

Ye archewyves, stondeth at defence,
Sin ye be stronge as is a greet camaille.⁸⁹

CAT

The fable of belling the cat and the difficulty of finding a rat bold enough to do it is told in *Piers Plowman*; and a reference occurs in *Political Poems and Songs (On the Times)* :

The cattys nec to bylle
hic et hic ligare veretur.⁹⁰

Several proverbs introduce to our notice the powers and nature of the cat :

For ofte Museþ þe kat.
after hire moder.

For right no mo than Gibbe our cat
(Fro myce and rattes went his wyle).

... as a cat wolde ete fisshes
Withoute wetinge of his cles.

For ye be lyk the sweynte cat
That wolde have fish ; but wostow what?
He wolde no-thing wete his clowes.

A longer passage in the Maunciple's Tale has :

Lat take a cat, and fostre him wel with milk,
And tendre flesh, and make his couche of silk,
And lat him seen a mous go by the wal ;
Anon he weyveth milk, and flesh, and al,
And every deyntee that is in that hous,
Swich appetyt hath he to ete a mous.
Lo, here hath lust his dominacioun,
And appetyt flemeth discrecioun.

⁸⁹ C.Mi. 5136. L. of A. 6331-4. Ch-CTE. 1195-6.

⁹⁰ P.P.B. Text-Prol. P.P.S. p. 274, 3-4.

The Albanien we are told :

By nighth als a cat hy seeth ;

and the Vigour made by A-Grippa :

Hit loked forþ as a Cat.

We find—

We schul him hunte as Cat doþ mys,

and a striking simile :

Ac he hadde a nose as a cat.

This passage throws a light upon the cat's reputation :

Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat ;
For who-so wolde senge a cattes skin,
Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in ;
And if the cattes skin be slyk and gay,
She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,
But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,
To shewe hir skin, and goon a-caterwawed ;

and the following seems to show that the skin had a commercial value :

I have as moche pite of pore men as pedlare hath of cattes,
That wolde kille hem, yf he cacche hem myghte for couetise of
here skynnes.⁹¹

CATATHLEBA

See Beasts.

CENTAUR

See Classical.

⁹¹ *Prov. of Alfred*, 296-7. R. of R. 6204-5. G.C.A. iv. 1108-9. Ch-H. of F. 1783-5. CTH. 175-82. L. of A. 5275. *Sta. of Rome*, 628. V. MS. lv (14), 71. A. & M. 8726. Ch-CTD. 348-54. P.P. B. V., 258-9.

CESSUS

See Beasts.

CHAMELEON

Two characteristics of this creature are its change of colour and its living on air. Aelian, Isidore of Seville and Solinus record the former of these, and Pliny the latter. The passages describing these qualities are :

Lich unto the Camelion,
Which upon every sondri hewe
That he beholt he moste newe
His colour, and thus unavised
Fulofte time he stant disguised.

and

Alsuo dep þe lyeʒere·hueruore he is ase þe gamelos þat leueþ
by þe eyr and naʒt ne heþ ine his roppes bote wynd·and heþ
ech manere colour þet ne heþ non his oʒen.⁹²

CHOUGH

See Birds.

COCK, HEN, CHICKEN

See Food.

See Birds.

The well-known tale of the Nonne Preeste needs no repetition.⁹³

In *Lay le Freine* the maid went all night and was weary :

Sone after she gan herk
Cokkes crowe, and houndes berk.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* is a reference to this :

But whan the cok, comune astrologer,
Gan on his brest to bete, and after crowe.

⁹² Aelian, B 14. Isidore of Seville, ii, 18. Solinus, c. xlix. Pliny, xiii, 51. G.C.A.i. 2698-702. A. of I. p. 62, 31-4.

⁹³ Ch-CTB. 4011 ff.

The author of *Piers Plowman* uses as an expression of worthlessness :

Or þat acounted conscience at a cokkes fether or an hennes!
and the *Meditations* paraphrase a verse of Scripture :

Behold þe dyscyplys, yn here wendying,
As chekenes crepyn vndyr þe dame wyng.⁹⁴

COD

See Food.

CORMORANT

See Birds.

CRABEN

See Beasts.

CRANES

See Food.

See Birds.

In the *Brut* is a good description of cranes on their flight being harried in the air by hawks and on the ground by hounds.⁹⁵

CRICKET

This creature lives, so the *Piers Plowman* informs us, in one text, "in þe fyre," and in another text "by kynde of fur." The second passage runs :

For lent was þer neuere lyf·bote lyflode were yshape,
Wher-of opere wherefore and wher-with to lyuen ;
The worme þat woneþ vnder erthe and in water fisshes,
The crykett by kynde of fur and corlew by the wynde,
Bestes by gras & by greyn and by grene rotes.

⁹⁴ *Lai le Freine*, 147-8. Ch-T. & C. iii. 1415-6. P.P. B. XIX. 410.
Meditations, 285-6.

⁹⁵ L.B. 20162-75.

In view of the continuation of the passage, there seems no reason to doubt that it means that the cricket actually eats fire.⁹⁶

CROCODILE

A long passage in the *Life of Alisaunder* tells of the crocodile, its nature and habits. The peculiarities which concern us most, in our interest in Folklore, are these :

(1) The people who dwell by the Nile take dolphins and crocodiles, and ride upon them over rivers and on land.

(2) The crocodiles have eggs, as the griffins.

(3) They have no tongue.

(4) They have three rows of teeth.

(5) They are slain by the spines that are found on the dolphins' back.⁹⁷

CROW

See Classical.

See Birds.

Another passage gives a simile :

Vnder stede fet so thicke
In crowes nest so doth the sticke.⁹⁸

CUCKOO

See Birds.

In the *Knights Tale* we have two references to this bird :

She woot namore of al this hote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an harel!

and in the description of the temple of Venus :

Dispense, bisynesse, and jelousye,
That wered of yelwe goldes a gerland,
And a cokkow sitting on hir hand.

⁹⁶ P.P. C. xvi. 240-4.

⁹⁷ L. of A., 6573-85, 6596-625.

⁹⁸ A. & M. 9183-4.

Otherwise, the bird, well-known though it must have been, does not seem to have attracted much attention from the poets whose works we are considering.⁹⁹

CURLEW

See Cricket.

CUTTLE-FISH

See Food.

DEER

See Hart.

DEUTERAUNS

See Beasts.

DIVER

See Birds.

DOG, HOUNDS, GREYHOUND, MASTIFF

See Classical.

In the story of Katerine we find a trace of the importance attached in early times to burial. The empress was put to death, and her body exposed so that hounds might eat it. "Porfirie" went at night and buried it. The *Life of Beket* contains some verses which relate to the refusal of some hounds to eat the bread which Beket had broken, shortly before his death, showing thereby their instinctive knowledge of his approaching martyrdom.¹⁰⁰

On two occasions in St. Martin's life hounds obeyed his commands; greyhounds were chasing a hare, and the saint bade them stop; they did! At another time some hounds were

⁹⁹ Ch-CTA. 1809-10, 1928-30.

¹⁰⁰ E.S.E.L. xxv. 248-50; xxvii. 1957-64.

worrying one of his men ; the man told them to stop in the saint's name ; they did St. Martin's will.¹⁰¹

But perhaps the strangest story of a dog is that of peti crewe told in *Sir Tristrem* :

Pe king, a welp he brouzt
 Bifor tristrem pe trewe ;
 What colour he was wrouzt
 Now ichil zou schewe.
 Silke nas non so soft,
 He was rede, grene and blewe.
 Pai pat him seizen oft
 Of him hadde gamen and glewe,
 Y wis.
 His name was peti crewe,
 Of him was michel priis.

The colours are intriguing. They hardly seem fairy colours ; does the decoration of Dog Toby in Punch and Judy throw any light on the problem of finding their origin? ¹⁰²

References to hunting are numerous : boar-hunting in the *Brut* : cranes—see Crane : fox in the *Brut* and in *Gawayne and the Grene Knight* : hare in the legend of St. Martin, in the song of the husbandman and in Chaucer : hart in the *Brut* and in *Songs on King Edward's Wars*. General remarks on hunting are also found in *Handlyng Synne*, in the *Desputisoun* and the *Complaint of the Ploughman*. In this connection, too, may be mentioned again the baiting of bull and boar and bear.¹⁰³

The custom of throwing a body to the hounds and refusing to it burial is mentioned more than once. The legend of Katerine has been quoted ; a *Song on the Times—Edward I*—has :

Men ne schold ham biri in non chirch,
 But cast ham ute as a hund.

¹⁰¹ E.S.E.L. lxiv. 136-41, 142-7.

¹⁰² *Sir Tristrem*, 2399-409.

¹⁰³ L.B. 1696-9, 30319-23, 20853-8. G. & G.K. 1697-729. E.S.E.L. lxiv. 136-41. P.S.E., p. 152, 2-3. Ch-C.T.Prol. 190-2. L.B. 26761-2. P.P.S. p. 81, 3-6. H.S. 3083-4. Desp. p. 22. 1-7; p. 24, 3-5 ; p. 26, 19-20. P.P.S. p. 330, 29-31.

Reference has also been made to the story of Orestes ; and the custom is made a reproach to Creon in the *Knights Tale* :

He, for despyt, and for his tyrannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileinye,
Of alle our lordes, whiche that ben slawe,
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep y-drawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,
Neither to been y-buried nor y-brent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despyt.

Griselda makes her lament :

O tendre, o dere, o yonge children myne,
Your woful mooder wende stedfastly
That cruel houndes or som foul vermyne
Hadde eten yow ;

and *Januarie* appears to think of absence of burial :

Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
Than that myn heritage sholde falle
In straunge hand, . . . ¹⁰⁴

In the *Legend of St. Brendan* a hound appears, to lead the saint and his people. But, in general, the hound was given a bad name, and " hound " was well known as a term of abuse ; " heathen hound " is used in the *Brut*, and we find in one place :

let þu þa hundes :
hannen to-gaderes.
eiper freten oþer :
swa hund deþ his broþer.
and leten heore whelpes :
whaeruen heom bi-sides.
elc oþer quelle :
þat þer nan quic no leue.

¹⁰⁴ E.S.E.L. xxv. 248-50. P.S. of E., p. 197, ll. 31-2 of poem. G.C.A. iii. 2009-15, 2075-8. Ch-CTA. 941-7. CTE. 1093-6, 1438-40.

Condemnation is expressed in the *Persones Tale*, and their man-eating propensities are described in these words :

“ That buth of the kuynde of helle ;
And also houndes buth unkuynde,
That wollith frete monnes kuynde,”

and in the legend of St. Martin.¹⁰⁵

This ill character is further disclosed in the proverbs which mention hounds : Wyclif and the author of the *Romaunt of the Rose* use the saying about the “ hound to his spuyng.” And we find :

And held no better lawe
Than the hounde with his felawe.

“ he that entremetteth him of the noyse or stryf of another man, is lyk to him that taketh an hound by the eres.”

“ Godenes in zou nas neuer y-founde,
No more mizt þan in an hounde.”

“ Ȝyue þe chylde when he wyl kraue,
And þy whelpe whyl hyt wyl haue,
þan mayst þou make yn a stounde
A foule chylde and a feyre hounde.”

þe bicche bitit ille,
þan he berke stille.

And eek to Januarie he gooth as lowe
As ever dide a dogge for the bowe.

I am holden, quod he, as hende-as hounde is in kychyne.

It is nought good a sleping hound to wake.

¹⁰⁵ E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 119-20, 123. L.B. 31675-82. Ch-CTI. 907.
L. of A. 5999-6001. E.S.E.L. lxiv. 142-7.

þai huitet on him viliker
þan he had ben a hund.

The giant in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* hates Christians as hounds.¹⁰⁶

The similes and comparisons in which the hound is introduced for the most part confirm the bad impression of the animal :

It stank fouler than ani hounde.

And wel werse than an hound !

And werid him on his aun bit
als hund es on a ban.¹⁰⁷

We see but little good recorded of the hound in these sayings.
The dog's character is somewhat better, though we have :

And driue hem ut, þei he weren crus,
So dogges ut of milne-hous.

Now is a dogge also dere þat in a dych lygges.

And þus I lyue louelees·lyke a luther dogge.

With þis þai scott him als a dog
Right vte o þair synagog.

And stynken as water-dogges.

As hyt were careyne þat dogges ete.

¹⁰⁶ E.W. of W. p. 25, 20 ; p. 253, 19-20. R. of R. 7287-8. A. & M. 491-2. Ch-CTB. 2732. G. of W. 3713-4. H.S. 7239-42. Prov. of A. 652-3 (Text ii). Ch-CTE. 2013-4 (cf. CTD. 1369-71). P.P.B. v. 261. Ch-T. & C. iii. 764. C.Mi. 15833-4. B. of H. 1848.

¹⁰⁷ O. Miles, p. 34, 4. *P. of Seven Sages*, 1523. C.Mi. 16929-30.

In the dog's favour, we have, of unkind men :

A dogge ys kynder, þat goþ lous,
for, feed him, and he will not leave you.¹⁰⁸

The greyhound is mentioned specially in some places : a king sent :

In a cheyne of golde tweie grifhoundes.

Hy weren mychel as lyouns.

the hounds broke the chain and killed lion and elephant !
We read of a giant :

He grevede as a grewhounde, with grisly tuskes ;
and in the same poem, that King Arthur took :

His hede grehownde, and his bronde, ande no byerne elles,
And bownnes over a brode mede, with breth at his herte.

A simile that occurs more than once is :

So grehound doth out of les.¹⁰⁹

Hounds were regarded as possessions of value, and we find them reckoned with other costly things :

“ Some wearen mitre and ring,
With double worsted well ydight,
With royall meat and riche drinke,
And rideth on a courser as a knight,
With hauke and with hounds eke,
With brooches or ouches on his hood.”

So Chaucer in the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* writes of the Monk :

Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight ;
Of priking and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ H. 1966-7. Clan. 1792. P.P. B. v. 118. C.Mi. 13658-9. L. of A. 5771. H.S. 8762, 5096.

¹⁰⁹ L. of A. 5284, 5286. M.A. 1075, 3465-6. A. & M. 9038, 9136, 9594 (cf. Ch-CTProl. 190-2).

¹¹⁰ P.P.S. p. 334, 13-8. Ch-CTProl. 190-2.

The hounds of hell are spoken of ; in contrast, in *Clannesse* there occurs :

For when þat þe helle herde þe houndez of heuen
He watȝ ferlyly fayn, vnfolded by lyue.¹¹¹

Man's speech in some countries is compared with the " berk " of hounds :

And of Sab the duk Mauryn ;
He was of Kaymes kunrede ;
His men no kouthe speke, no grede,
Bote al, so houndes, grenne, and berke,
So us tellith this clerkis.

Again, there is another race :

Houndynges men clepeth hem wide.
From the brest to the grounde
Men hy ben, abouen houndes.
Berking of houndes hy habbe.
Her honden, withouten gabbe,
Ben y-shuldred as an fysshe,
And clawed after hound, i-wisse.¹¹²

There are references to a " tey " dog :
He ne may no man, ase ȝe i-seoth:taken aȝein is wille,
Nonmore þane a teiȝ doggue:þat is in strongue teiȝe,

is said of the devil.

A teie doggue is clib I-nov:ȝwane man comez In is siȝte,
and :

þouȝ þei bynden hem not to o synguler place as a tey dogge.¹¹³
It is said that suicides :

Wit hundes eten þe mast parti.

¹¹¹ Desp. p. 22, 7 ; p. 24, 3-5 ; p. 26, 19-20. A. & M. 6384. Clan. 961-2.

¹¹² L. of A. 1932-6, 4963-9.

¹¹³ E.S.E.L. xlv. 300-1 ; xlv. 281. E.W. of W. p. 251, 33 to 252, 1.

Hound-bread is mentioned with horse-bread in *Piers Plowman*. Careyne is said to be food for hounds and for dogs. Another breed of dogs, the mastiff, is named, where it is said of Belshazzar :

& romyes as a rad ryth þar rores for drede.¹¹⁴

Other references to dogs and hounds are to be found in the *Life of Alisaunder, Handlyng Synne*, Vernon MS., *The King of Tars*, Wyclif's Works, Chaucer, *The Desputisoun*, *The Complaint of the Ploughman*, *On the Deposition of Richard II.*¹¹⁵

DOLPHINS

See Food.

See Crocodile. Authority for the wounding of the crocodile by the spines of the dolphin is to be found in Pliny, Solinus and Isidore of Seville.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ C.Mi. 22862. P.P. A vii. 203-4. Ch-CTI. 441. H.S. 8762. Clan. 1543.

¹¹⁵ L. of A. 3882. H.S. 499-500. V. MS. xxxi (2), 318. K. of Tars, 397-427. E.W. of W. p. 104, 2-4 ; p. 246, 22-6, etc. Ch-Boe. iv. p. 3, 119-22, etc. Desp. p. 27, 1-4. P.P.S. p. 386, 5-6.

¹¹⁶ Pliny, viii. 38. Solinus, c. xli. I. of S. vi. 11.

(to be continued)



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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

(continued from Vol. LII, p. 34)

DOVE

See Birds.

The dove as a symbol representing the human soul or the Holy Ghost finds a place in several of the legends of the saints ; in *Seinte Margarete þat Holi Maide*, a dove whiter than snow, flew down from heaven, when the saint suffered martyrdom, and, when her head was cut off :

Rigt as þ^t maide deide:as al þ^t folc iseȝ

A whyt coluere þer fleȝ of hire:into heuene anheȝ.

When Seint Fey is roasted, unhurt, over a fire,

A coluere þare cam, so ȝwijt so milk:fram heouene fleo on heiȝ,
bearing a golden crown, and set it on her head. When Katerine lay in prison :

A ȝwit coluere þare cam fram heuene:to hire euer-ech dai

And brouȝte hire fram heuene mete:In-to prisone ase heo lai.

So, too, in the story of St. Kenelm, a white dove plays a prominent part, flying from heaven to the altar at St. Peter's at Rome, and laying upon it a writing which led to the discovery of the saint's body.¹¹⁷

According to the legend of the choice of St. Joseph, all David's kin were to be called, each to bear a wand. As a sign

A duu þat was fra heuen send

þare lighted dun, and þar-on lend,

i.e. on Joseph's wand.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ *St. Margaret þat Holi Maide*, 290-314. E.S.E.L. xxiii, 80 ; xxv. 175-6 ; xlix. 245-9.

¹¹⁸ C.Mi. 10775-6.

The symbolism is made more clear in a story told of a monk who fell from grace :

Out of hys mouþe he say flye
A dowue vn-to þe fyrmament ;
þe holy gost þan from hym went.

On the dove's return to the monk, and re-entering his mouth, the monk was forgiven.¹¹⁹

A tale is told of St. Chrysostom in the same book, how, after the consecration in the Mass, he was accustomed to see a dove :

Yn a dowue lyknes he myȝt se,
So whyte and so blesful, and so clere.¹²⁰

In the romance of *Otuel*, Roland and Otuel fight. King Charles fearing that he will lose Roland, bids his knights pray. A dove appears, though the story does not say from heaven :

A whit coluere þer cam fle
þat al þe peple miȝten se,
On otuweles heued he liȝte,
þoru þe uertu of godes miȝte.¹²¹

In the *Brut* it is related that as the four queens passed along :

& þreo snau-white culueren :
sente an heore schulderen.¹²²

The dove was adopted as a heraldic device, upon a helm :

Theron was a coluer of gold
The Ioly creste in hys fote gan hold.¹²³

The *Romaunt of the Rose* gives us two similes ; of Fraunchyse we read :

And she was simple as dowve on tree,
and, of Youthe and her lemman :

But men mighte seen hem kisse there,
As it two yonge doves were.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ H.S. 218 ff.

¹²⁰ H.S. 8828-9.

¹²¹ *Otuel*, 577-80.

¹²² L.B. 24521-2.

¹²³ G. of W. (Caius), 10540-1.

¹²⁴ R. of R. 1219, 1297-8.

DRAKE AND DUCK

See Birds.

Two proverbs are on record about this bird ; one from *Piers Plowman* :

Drynke but myd þe doke and dyne but ones ;
the other is from the *Parlement of Foules* ; of lasting love :

Ye, quek ! " yit quod the doke, ful wel and faire,
There been mo sterres, god wot, than a paire ! " ¹²⁵

DROMEDARY

A reference to this animal, whose speed is attested by Isidore of Seville, is found :

No dromedarie no is þer non
So swiþe goand so is he on. ¹²⁶

THE EAGLE

See Birds.

The *Bestiary* tells us how the eagle renews his youth. When his limbs are unwieldy, his beak awry, his flight weak, his eyes dim, then he seeks a well, flies over it, through the sixth and seventh heavens. The sun burns all his flight feathers, and makes his eyes bright ; his feathers fall, owing to the heat ; he drops down into the well, and comes out all new, save only his beak. Then he goes to a stone and pecks till his beak loses its crookedness. ¹²⁷

This renewal of life is referred to :

A wys mon seiþ þat bestes weren,
Hert and Eddre, þeos þreo, and Ern,
þat heore lyf chaungede þorwh here kynde. ¹²⁸

¹²⁵ P.P. B. v. 75. Ch-M.P. v. 594-5.

¹²⁶ Isidore of S. i. 36. G. of W. 6125-6.

¹²⁷ Best. 53-87.

¹²⁸ V. MS. i. 63-5.

Some of the acts of the bird, as part of the process of renewal, described in the *Bestiary* may be responsible for the bird being taken as an emblem in such passages as the following. Of St. John the Evangelist :

For-þi to þe arn lickest es he,
 Ðat es na foxl sua ferr mai se.

And es ne foxl sa gleg of ei,
 Ne nan þat mai flei sua hei.

A passage similar to that quoted above runs :

In þe fourme of Ane Ern he is de-peint:ase we ofte i-seoth
 with eige.

For þe Ern is swiftest of alle foules:and hext he may fleo :
 For ʒwane he is in þe lofte an heizh:þat herre he may non beo,
 ʒuyt he may here in þe grounde:ane luttel worm i-seo ;
 Also he may so heize fleo:and þe firmament so neizh,
 Ðat alмест is wyngene brenneth:ʒwane he is so heizh.¹²⁹

Of the Sultan's pavilion, we read :

A real pauloun he pere seye
 Wiþ an eren of gold an heye.

In *Sir Ferumbras* :

By þe egle of gold þat brizte schon:vppon charlis paupyloun.

Oppon þe tour aundward riȝt:þar stondeþ a iuwel gay,
 An egle of gold þat schynap brizt:so doþ þe sonne on may.

The behaviour of a bird so important as the eagle was naturally considered to be ominous, and we accordingly find in the *Brut* that the bird's cry fore-shadowed the death of Ruhhudibras, and in another place that, generally, the assembly and flight of

¹²⁹ C.Mi. 13444-5. 13448-9. E.S.E.L. lx. 159-64. *Sir Ferumbras*, 78 : 1694-5.

numbers of them betoken the coming of a hostile host. So, too, Melior dreamed of an eagle :

“ wheþer it geýne to gode-or grame, wot i neuer.”
 “ nay, i-wisse,” sede william. “ i wot wel þe soþe,
 þat it gayneþ but god-for god may vs help.”¹³⁰

The height of the eagle's flight is mentioned :

Or, if yow list to fleen as hye in the air
 As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,
 This same stede shal bere yow ever-more ;

and the *Azenbite of Inwyte*, in the description of the mermaid, states that these have claws of eagles.¹³¹

EELS

See Food.

See Fish.

One means of catching them, which, I think, has survived into modern times, by walking on the bottom of a stream bare-foot, is given in the *Hous of Fame* :

And troden faste on othere heles
 And stampe, as men don after eles.¹³²

The belief among the ancients that there were in the Ganges eels three hundred feet long is repeated in the *Life of Alisaunder*, which asserts that they draw into the water, with their hands, elephants and knights.¹³³

ELEPHANTS

The account given in the *Bestiary* of “ elpes ” tells that they are in India ; they have bodies like mountains ; herd together like sheep ; are of a cold nature till they eat of the mandrake. The females go two years with their young, and have only one in a lifetime. They stand in water to bring forth ; they have

¹³⁰ L.B. 2824-35, 21753-70. W. of P. 3107-9.

¹³¹ Ch-CTF. 122-4. A. of I. p. 61, 8 ff.

¹³² Ch-HF. 2153-4.

¹³³ Pl. ix. 2. Sol. c. lvii. I. of S. vi. 41. L. of A. 5792-7.

no joints to rise with ; when tired, they lean against trees ; the hunter, seeing this, saws the tree ; the elephant sleeps and falls. Then it roars and calls for help ; one or several come to its aid ; last, a youngling comes, and, putting his snout under him, with the help of the others, raises him.¹³⁴

Of these characteristics not many are recorded in the verse we are exploring. Gower, in some Latin lines in the *Confessio Amantis*, gives countenance to the idea that they are without joints : Set rigor illius plus Elephante riget. The *Azenbite of Inwyt* praises their continence ; but in the few references to the animal which we find, the fear which elephants have of the shrieking of the hog is that which most interests our study.

By Porus conseil hogges hy took,
And beten hem so they shrightte.
The olyfauntz away hem dightte ;
For hy ne haue so mychel drade,
Of nothing as of hogges grade.¹³⁵

The uses of the elephant as beasts of burden, and for providing ivory horns to be employed as trumpets are mentioned, and we find them among the plunder taken by King Arthur's men, when they overran the Roman camp.¹³⁶

The crocodile is said to be as strong as the elephant (see Crocodile).¹³⁷

ERMINE

A most interesting passage in Guy of Warwick relates how Tirri fell asleep on Guy's knees :

& when sir Tirri was fallen on slepe
Sir Gij biheld him, & gan to wepe,
& gret morning gan make.
Pan seize he an ermine com of his moupe
Als swift als winde, þat bloweþ on cloupe,
As white as lilii on lake.

¹³⁴ Best. 604-73.

¹³⁵ G.C.A. 6th Latin line after 1-1234. A. of I. p. 224, 28-31. L. of A. 5737-41.

¹³⁶ *M. Arthure*, 1286, 2282-8.

¹³⁷ L. of A. 6605.

To an hille he ran, wipouten obade ;
At þe hole of þe roche in he glade.

Gij wonderd for þat sake.
& when he out of þat roche cam
Into Tirries mouþe he nam :
Anon Tirri gan wake.

On waking, Tirri told Guy how he had dreamed that he had gone to the hill opposite, entered a cave, and found a treasure there. The two went together, and found the treasure.¹³⁸

FALCON

The story of how Canacee, understanding the language of birds, was told that a tercelet had spurned the love of a falcon, which Canacee heard crying with a "pitous voys," is told in the Squieres Tale ; and, later in the story, the tercelets are described with tidifs and oules as "false foules."¹³⁹

The practice of falconry was so well known that it has given rise to some proverbs :

kowardyse hyt ys, and foule maystry,
To þrowe a faucoun at euery flye ;
Of flyes men mow hem weyl spourge,
And þrowe to hem naght but a scourge.

"Nultow never late ne skete
A goshauk maken of a kete,
No faucon mak of busard,
No hardy knyght mak of coward."

and, when Candace showed Alexander an image, she said :

Hit is the y-liche, leove brothir,
So any faukon is anothir.

A simile in which the falcon is introduced, is :

Þanne was he ase fresch to fízt,
So was þe faukoun to þe flízt.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ G. of W. (Auch.), 162, 1-12.

¹³⁹ Ch-CTF. 411-3, 647-8.

¹⁴⁰ H.S. 10915-8. L. of A. 3047-50, 7692-3. B. of H. 735-6.

FIELDFARE

See Birds.

This bird is also brought into a proverb :

And singe, " Go, farewel, feldefare."

The harm is doon, and—farewel, feldefare.¹⁴¹

FLIES

In the *Brut* it is recorded that there came once heavy rain ; after the rain, a plague of flies, which in its turn was followed by " mon-qualm " such that few folk were left alive.¹⁴²

Other references are proverbial, as :

(Of woman)—

Over heo bylevith in folie,
So in the lym doth the flye.

(Somnour loq.)—

Lo, gode men, a flye and eek a frere
Wol falle in every dish and eek matere.

Bi grete god, that aw this day,
Na mar moves me thi flyt
Than it war a flies byt.¹⁴³

See also Falcon.

FLOUNDER

See Food.

FOX

Again we come to a beast that figures in the *Bestiary*. This records that it seizes cock and capon, gander and goose ; when hungry, she lies still in a furrow, feigning death. The raven

¹⁴¹ R. of R. 5510. Ch-T. & C. iii. 861.

¹⁴² L.B. 3898-909.

¹⁴³ L. of A. 419-20. Ch-CTD. 835-6. Y. & G. 92-4.

and other birds think she is dead, and pounce upon her. She leaps up and eats her fill. This tale of feigned death is repeated by Wyclif, and it seems likely that Chaucer was acquainted with it.¹⁴⁴

The story of Chanticleer introduces the fox, but, except for the connection of the tale with the animal cycle, there are no special features which call for detailed attention in the present study.¹⁴⁵

The hunting of the fox is the subject of two descriptions, one in the *Brut*, and the other in *Gawayne and the Grene Knight*. Here again, no notice is required now.¹⁴⁶

Foxes possessed of a bite which was so poisonous that it caused death are recorded in the *Life of Alisaunder*. Among the beasts that left the ark after the deluge, *Clannesse* names the fox as making for the woods; it is mentioned in *Cursor Mundi* in the prophecy attributed to Jeremiah (see Bull).¹⁴⁷

FROGS

Frogs are not often mentioned; the plague of frogs in the land of Egypt, and the traveller's tale of frogs being thought to be good food, are two examples occurring in the verse we are considering.¹⁴⁸

GANDER, GOOSE

See Food.

See Birds.

Geese have found their way into English proverbs; the Wife of Bath makes use of one:

Ne noon so grey goos goth ther in the lake,
As, seistow, that wol been with-oute make.

¹⁴⁴ Best. 384-423. E.W. of W. p. 123, 22-4. Ch-Boe. iv. p. 3, 123-5.

¹⁴⁵ Ch-CTB. 4011 ff.

¹⁴⁶ L.B. 20840-70. G. & G.K. 1697-1729.

¹⁴⁷ L. of A. 5431-9. Clan. 534. C.Mi. 11647-50.

¹⁴⁸ C.Mi. 5928. L. of A. 6126-7.

Proserpina gives us another :

So that ye men shul been as lewed as gees.

While Wyclif writing of Prelates introduces a third :
for þei sillen a faat goos for litel or nouȝt, but þe garlek
costiþ many shillyngis.¹⁴⁹

GNATS

A vivid simile has :

Gauelokes also thicke flowe
So gnattes Ichil avowe.¹⁵⁰

GOATS

See Food.

Though there were five hundred goats in a fold, one wolf
would attack them, says the *Brut*.

A proverb in the *Romaunt of the Rose* :

Or ellis he is not wyse ne sage
No more than is a gote ramage,

and the epithet goat-toothed (with teeth set far apart—Gloss.)
in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* and in the Wife of
Bath's story, are a small contribution for an animal which was
well known to the people of our land.¹⁵¹

GOLDFINCH

This bird has attracted the attention of two writers :

So a goldfinch doth on the hegge ;

and in the description of the Prentis :

Gaillard he was as goldfinch in the shawe.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Ch-CTD. 269-70 ; CTE. 2275. E. W. of W. p. 82, 32-3.

¹⁵⁰ A. & M. 9171-2.

¹⁵¹ L.B. 21301-12. R. of R. 5383-4. Ch-CT-Prol. 468 ; CTD. 602-3.

¹⁵² L. of A. 783. Ch-CTA. 4367.

GOSHAWK

See Birds.

See Falcon.

In the tale of *Ceix and Alceone* it is said of Ceix :

... and he hadde also
A brother, which was cleped tho
Dedalion, and he per cas
Fro kinde of man forschape was
Into a Goshawk of liknesse.¹⁵³

GRIFFIN

See Beasts.

HARE

Reference is made to the " hunting " of the hare in

He sall ȝow hunt as hund dose hare,

in :

Men myȝtten as well have huntȳd
an hare with a tabre,

and in the Song of the Husbandman :

That me us honteth ase hound doth the hare.

He us honteth ase hound hare doh on hulle.

Winner and Waster speaks of finding a hare in each holt ; and contains an involved prophecy which mentions " hares appon herthe-stones." On the dispersion from the ark the hares went to the gorsteȝ. Among proverbial expressions and similes we find :

This Frenshe come to Flaundres so liht so the hare.

And nu ben theih liouns in halle, and hares in the feld.

She woot namore of al this hote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare.

For thogh this Somnour wood were as an hare,¹⁵⁴

HART, DEER

The *Bestiary* tells us: The hart drags the adder from the stone, through his nose and swallows it. The poison burns him; he thirsts for sweet water and drinks greedily. The poison has no power to hurt him then: he then casts his horns and makes himself young. If harts seek food at a distance, and have water to cross, one leads and the others follow; none leaves another at his need; but lays his shin-bone on the other's loin-bone. If the leader tires, others help him.¹⁵⁵

The changing of kind or rejuvenation mentioned above is referred to in the Vernon MS., and a fuller description of the process, which gives one hundred years as the age of the hart, is found in *On the Deposition of Richard II*:

I mene of the hertis
that hautesse of 3eris,
that pasture prikkyth,
and her prevy age,
whan they han hoblid on the holte
an hundrid of 3eris,
that they ffeblen in ffeisshe,
in ffelle and in bonis;
her kynde is to kevere,
if they cacche my3th,
adders that (h)armen
alle hende bestis,
thoru busschis and bromes
this beste of his kynde

¹⁵⁴ P.P.S. p. 81, 5; p. 376, 23-4. P.S.E. p. 152-3. W. & W. 13-7; 402-6. Clan. 535. P.S.E. p. 192, 3; p. 334, 252. Ch-CTA. 1809-10; CTD. 1327.

¹⁵⁵ Best. 307-28, 349-69.

secheth and sercheth
 tho schrewed wormes,
 that steleth on the stedes
 to styngge hem to deth ;
 and whanne it happeth the herte
 to hente the edder,
 he puttyth him to peyne,
 as his pray asketh,
 and ffedith him on the venym,
 his felle to anewe,
 to leve at more lykyng
 a long tyme after.¹⁵⁶

Harts and deer figure in legendary stories : in those of St. Blase, on his knees, praying, surrounded by deer ; of Julian, hunting a hart, which turned and spoke to him ; of Eustas, who pursued a hart, which also spoke ; and, when it turned, displayed a cross of light on its head.¹⁵⁷

Cheuelere Assigne tells the tale of the hind serving as foster-mother to the seven exposed children.¹⁵⁸

We are told that the rhinoceros has a head like a hart. From the ark the harts went to "hyȝe heȝe" ; and they are to be found in the proverb : "the litel wesele wol slee the grete bole and the wilde hert."¹⁵⁹

Their swiftness and timidity are referred to in similes, as well as their being hunted by hounds or by lion. Alexander is said to be "wilde so roo" ; and in the *Life* we have :

So heo ferden so deor in halle.

There they holdith heom togedre,
 So flok of deor in thondur wedre.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ V. MS. i. 63-5. P.P.S. p. 391, 23 to p. 392, 12.

¹⁵⁷ E.S.E.L. lxxiii. 17-21 ; xxxviii. 6-15 ; lix. 19-53.

¹⁵⁸ C. Assigne, 115-7.

¹⁵⁹ L. of A. 6545. Clan. 535. Ch-CTB. 2515.

¹⁶⁰ L.B. 26761-2. Ch-Boe., iv. p. 3, 127-30. A. & M. 7009-10. L. of A. 2276, 1990, 2440, 3741-2.

HAWK

See Crane.

On the Dispersion the hawks went to the "hyge rochez," and, besides mention of hunting expeditions, we read of a contented hawk preening his feathers, and of the following :

For hauk is eth, als i here say,
To reclaym pat has tint his pray.

Wyth y3en open & mouth ful cłos,
I stod as hende as hawk in halle.¹⁶¹

HEDGEHOG

In the legend of St. Sebastian the arrows in his body were as thick as the spines of the hedgehog.¹⁶²

HERON

See Birds.

See Food.

Two interesting passages, one in French, and the other in English prose, help to picture the character of this bird ; the one accuses it of being the most cowardly of birds—afraid of its own shadow ; the other states that, when the parent birds are old and unable to provide for themselves, the heron " draws them forth." ¹⁶³

HERRING

See Food.

We read that there is a folk :

Ac they liveth, so theo heryng,
By the water, and gendryth therynne.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Clan. 537. G.C.A. vi. 2201-4. C.Mi. 3529-30. *Pearl*, 183-4.

¹⁶² E.S.E.L. xxviii, 48-50.

¹⁶³ P.P.S. p. 5. A. of I. p. 193, 13-5.

¹⁶⁴ L. of A. 6589-90.

(To be continued)



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Animal Beliefs. (Continued)

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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

(continued from *Vol. LII, p. 149*)

HIPPOPOTAMUS

The description of this beast is worth repeating :

Toppe, and rugge, and croupe, and cors,
Is semblabel to an hors.
A short beek, and a crooked tayl
He hath, and bores tussh, saunz fayle ;
Blak is his heued as pycche.
It is a beeste ferliche ;
It wil al fruyt ete,
Applen, noten, reisyng, and whete.
Ac mannes flesshe, and mannes bon,
It loueth best of everychon.

Hynd and forth he tourneth his pas,
Whan he gooth on any cas ;

Later on in the same poem we find, of the water-dwellers :

Ypotami hem leued myde.

The hippopotamus and the crocodile are slain by the Monoceros.¹⁶⁵

HORSE, MARE, COLT

The custom of naming horses is probably due to the great esteem and affection in which they were held ; this strong feeling of a knight for his horse reaches a very high point in the romance of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, in which Arondel fills a large place. This famous horse was not the only one Sir Beues owned ; at one period in his adventures another horse, Trenchefis,

¹⁶⁵ L. of A. 5186-95, 5200-1, 5773, 6554.

bore him on his back, over the sea, for a day and a night. The steed's love for his master was shown when King Yvor, thinking to ride Arondel, was thrown, because the horse felt that Beues was not on his back. It was shown again when in a race over seven miles, Beues begged Arondel to go faster, and in spite of the other two competitors having a start of two miles, Arondel, with Beues on his back won the race, and the prize! After Arondel's death, Guy made a house of religion—to sing for Beues and Josian :

& also for Arondel,
ȝif men for eni hors bidde schel.

(A note says of these two lines—" These lines seem to be added by the English translator.")

Esteem is further shown by the custom of parading the horse at a knight's funeral, to represent the dead man himself :

Bifore the cors rade a knyght,
On his stede that was ful wight,

and by the blessing of a horse that served his master well : thus Richard says to his horse :

... þou hast seruid me wel,
Crist ich þe by-teche.

In this connection we should also mention the curse that might fall upon the luckless horse that failed : at such a time, Berard

" Hors," he seyð, " acursed þou be,"

and Chaucer tells of the similar curse of a carter in the *Freres Tale* :

" The feend," quod he, " yow fecche body and bones,
As ferforthly as ever were ye foled ! " ¹⁶⁶

Tales about horses, in addition to that of Bucephalus (see Classical), include that of the green horse :

A grene hors gret & pikke,
A stede ful stif to strayne,

¹⁶⁶ B. of H. *passim*, 4617-8. Y. & G. 829-30. S. Fer. 3713-4. G. of W. 6471. Ch-CTD. 1544-5.

In brawdēn brydel quik,
To þe gome he watȝ ful gayn.

Þe mane of þat mayn hors much to hit lyke,
Wel crespēd & cemmed wyth knottes ful mony,
Folden in wyth fildore aboute þe fayre grene,
Ay a herle of þe here, an oþer of golde ;
Þe tayl & his toppyng twynnen of a sute,
& bounden boþe wyth a bande of a bryȝt grene,
Dubbed wyth ful dere stoneȝ, as þe dok lasted,
Syþen þrawn wyth a þwong a þwarle knot alofte,
Þer mony belleȝ ful bryȝt of brende golde rungen.
Such a fole vpon folde, ne freke þat hym rydes,
Watȝ neuer sene in þat sale wyth syȝt er þat tyme,
with yȝe ;

the colour of the horse, wrought by magic, we may suppose, in view of the reference to Morgne la Faye, the dressing of the mane, and the bells, all are very suggestive elements in the description.¹⁶⁷

Another story, of a similar nature, is told in the Squieres Tale about a steed of brass :

In at the halle-dore al sodeynly
Ther cam a knight up-on a stede of bras.

He explains that the King of Arabie and Inde sends :

This stede of bras, that esily and wel
Can, in the space of o day naturel,
This is to seyn, in foure and twenty houres,
Wher-so yow list, in droghte or elles shoures,
Beren your body in-to every place
To which your herte wilneth for to pace
With-outen wem of yow, thurgh foul or fair ;
Or, if yow list, to fleen as hye in the air
As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,
This same stede shal bere yow ever-more

¹⁶⁷ G. & G. K. 175-8, 187-98, 2444-55.

With-uten harm, till ye be ther yow leste,
 Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste ;
 And turne ayeyn, with wrything of a pin.
 He that it wroghte coude ful many a gin ;
 He wayted many a constellacioun
 Er he had doon this operacioun ;
 And knew ful many a seel and many a bond.

It was of Fairye, as the peple semed.
 Diverse folk diversely they demed ;
 As many hedes, as many wittes ther been.
 They murmureden as dooth a swarm of been.¹⁶⁸

There is a different setting to Gower's tale of Rosiphelee, so well written in his *Confessio*. Rosiphelee, rising early, saw a procession in the woods, a route of ladies,

On faire amblende hors thei sete,
 That were al whyte, fatte and grete,
 And everichon thei ride on side.
 The Sadles were of such a Pride,
 With Perle and gold so wel begon,
 So riche syh sche nevere non ;

Sche syh comende under the linde
 A womman up an hors behinde.
 The hors on which sche rod was blak,
 Al lene and galled on the back,
 And haltede, as he were encluyed,
 Wherof the womman was annuied ;
 Thus was the hors in sori plit,
 Bot for al that a sterre whit
 Amiddes in the front he hadde.
 Hir Sadel ek was wonder badde,
 In which the wofull womman sat,
 And natheles ther was with that
 A rich bridel for the nones

Of gold and preciouſe Stones.
 Hire cote was ſomdiel totore ;
 Aboute hir middel twenty ſcore
 Of horſe haltres and wel mo
 Ther hyngen ate time tho.

Tell me whi ye ben ſo beſeie
 And with theſe haltres thus begon.

“ For I whilom no love hadde,
 Min hors is now ſo fieble and badde,
 And al totore is myn arai,
 And every yeer this freiſſhe Maii
 Theſe luſti ladiſ ryde aboute,
 And I mot nedes ſuie here route
 In this manere as ye now ſe,
 And truſſe here haltres forth with me,
 And am bot as here horſe knave.
 Non other office I ne have.”

“ Now tell me thanne, I you beſeche,
 Wherof that riche bridel ſerveth.”

Of that mi will was good therto,
 That love ſoffreth it be ſo
 That I ſchal ſwicke a bridel were.

And with that word al ſodeinly
 Sche paſſeth, as it were a Sky,
 Al clene out of this ladi ſihte.

Rosiphelee thought :

And thus homward this lady wente,
 And changede al hire ferſte entente,
 Withinne hire herte and gan to ſwere
 That ſche none haltres wolde bere.¹⁶⁹

Among legends which bring horses into the narrative is that of St. Edward. After his murder, his step-mother was riding, to seek forgiveness; her palfrey refused to stir, and nothing would induce it to move. Even after she had alighted and wished to go forward on foot, she found that she had no power to do so. A second legend tells of St. Ypolit, patron saint of horses, for whom, we are told:

Ore louerd hat ofte for his loue:fair miracle i-do
On hors þat weren to him i-mete:and on coltes al-so.
Manie Men habbuth i-said þare-fore:3wane huy 3eme to hors
toke :
“ Ore louerd and seint ypolyt:þis hors saue and loke ! ” ¹⁷⁰

Customs connected with horses include the punishment of drawing with horses :

oþer mid horsen to-drawen :

and that of horse-racing; we have already seen the reference to this in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*; the following passage also appears to apply to racing at Whitsun-tide :

On Mononday is the pentecost,
Leodegan and alle his ost
Armed hem in aketouns.

Mani riche sadel on hast
Was on riche destrer cast.¹⁷¹

Proverbs dealing with horses are :

As good a bishop is my horse Ball.

“ The gretteste clerkes been noght the wysest men,”
As whylom to the wolf thus spak the mare ;
Of al hir art I counte noght a tare.”

¹⁷⁰ E.S.E.L. xvii. 165-72 ; lxvii. 79-82.

¹⁷¹ L.B. 1023-6. B. of H. 3511 ff. A. & M. 8673-5, 8685-6.

He was, I trowe, a twenty winter old,
 And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth;
 But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.

So is mony gedelyng.
 godlyche on horse.
 and is þeyh lutel wurp.
 wlonk bi þe glede.
 and vuel at þare neode.

And þou hafe caughte thi kaple, þou cares for no fothire.
 (Note says: "If you have caught your horse, you are anxious
 about no waggon-load," i.e. "you only care to have a horse to
 ride, not for agriculture.")

Betre is upon the bridel chiewe
 Thanne if he felle and overþrewē,
 The hors and stikede in the Myr.

Wherof bejaped with a mowe
 He goth, for whan the grete Stiede
 Is stole, thanne he taketh hiede,
 And makth the stable dore fast!

HORS, streyngthe of herte, and hardnesse,
 Schewith mony faire prowesses.¹⁷²

The value of horses as treasure is attested by their being
 mentioned in connection with ransom, and with riches generally.
 The *Romaunt of the Rose* says of the young man led by Richesse:

In clothing was he ful fetys,
 And lovede wel have hors of prys.
 He wende to have reproved be
 Of thefte or mordre, if that he
 Hadde in his stable an hakeney.¹⁷³

¹⁷² P.P.S. p. 315, 22. Ch-CTA. 4054-6; CTD. 600-2. Prov. of A.
 312-6. *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, 189. G.C.A. iii. 1629-31; iv. 900-3.
 L. of A. 3584-5.

¹⁷³ L.B. 22853-8. R. of R. 1133-7.

A dream recorded tells how the king came :

With a thousand knytes and mo,
And with ladyes fyfty also,
and ryden al on snow-white stedys,
And also white was her wedys
Y sey never seth y was borne
So feyr knyghtes me byforne.¹⁷⁴

Special food for horses is mentioned :
(Hunger loq.)

With houndes breed and horse bred-holde vp her hertis,
Abate hem with benes-for bollyng of her wombe.

“ And þat was bake for bayarde may be here bote.”¹⁷⁵

Allusions to the horse in heraldry occur ; notes upon the passages mention the Earl of Arundel and his son (the colt), and add : “ A horse was the cognizance of this family.”

Hit hath sclayn a stede strong.

coltis (nat) to greve.

ne hors well atamed.¹⁷⁶

There is a folk :

They buth long, and blak, and lokith as an houle.
They no haveth camayle, no olifaunt,
No kow, no hors, avenaunt,
On hond they creoputh, at o word,

and the dragon, the rhinoceros and the hippopotamus are compared with the horse :

As a somer it is brested bifore in þe brede
& swifter ernend þan ani stede.

¹⁷⁴ Sir O. 141-6.

¹⁷⁵ P.P. B. vi, 217-8 ; C. ix. 178.

¹⁷⁶ P.P.S. p. 364, 2 ; p. 392, 14, 16.

A was i-maned ase a stede ;
 To-fore, y-mad is his cors,
 After the forme of an hors.

and the last :

Toppe, and rugge, and croupe, and cors,
 Is semblabel to an hors.

while other comparisons and similes give us :

As an hors ys prykked þat goþ yn plogh.

They weore mowthed so a mare.

Þat þay blustered as blynde as bayard watz euer.

hi resembleþ an eddre þet hatte serayn·þet yernþ more
 zuyþere þanne hors.¹⁷⁷

HYDRA

See Classical.

HYENA

Two references to this animal may be mentioned ; one from
 Chaucer :

Thee nedeth nat the galle of noon hyene,
 That cureth eyen derke fro hir penaunce ;

and the other from the *Azenbite* :

Þet is þe felliste best þet me clepeþ hyane·þet ondelfþ þe
 bodies of dyade men and hise etep.¹⁷⁸

JAY

See Birds.

The jangling, blabbering, or chittering of the jay furnished a

¹⁷⁷ L. of A. 6331-4. G. of W. 7163-4. B. of H. 2667. L. of A.
 6542-3, 5186-7. Medit. 568. L. of A. 6125. Clan. 886. A. of I. p. 61,
 17.

¹⁷⁸ Ch-MP. x. 35-6. A. of I. p. 61, 24-6.

topic for writers of the fourteenth century ; but Chaucer gives another idea of the bird, in writing of the Miller's wife :

As any jay she light was and jolyf,
So was hir joly whistle wel y-wet.

and says of the crow in the Maunciple's Tale :

And taughte it speken, as men teche a jay.¹⁷⁹

KITE

See Birds.

The kite was of less esteem than the goshawk :

" Nultow never late ne skete
A goshawk maken of a kete.¹⁸⁰

LAMPREYS

See Food.

LAPWING

See Food.

See Birds.

Modern writers ascribe to this bird a diet of worms, but Gower tells us :

And as the Plover doth of Eir
I live, and am in good espeir.

Its falseness is mentioned not only by Chaucer, but also in the two following passages :

And lapwings, that well conneth lie.

And yit unto this dai men seith,
A lappewincke hath lore his feith
And is the brid falseste of alle.

while an unsavoury trait in its habits is alluded to in the *Agenbite*.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ P.P.S. p. 327, 27. W. & W. 26, 40. Ch-CTB. 774. E.W.W. p. 194, 24-5. Ch-CTG. 1397 ; CTA. 4154-5 ; CTH. 132.

¹⁸⁰ L. of A. 3047-8.

¹⁸¹ G.C.A. vi. 943-4. P.P.S. p. 344, 31. G.C.A. v. 6045-7. A. of I. p. 61, 30-2.

LARKS

See Birds.

When the body of St. Francis lay in a church, an assembly of larks, contrary to their nature, it is said, sang all night upon the building. Other references to the song of the lark are found in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, which poem also represents it as accompanying Cupid. In the Parlement of Foules the lark is the prey of the merlin and in *Sir Ferumbras* of the sparrowhawk; both of these statements are said to be correct.¹⁸²

LEOPARD

On the descent into Egypt, we are told, lions, pards and dragons "Bifor maria and ioseph yede"; and in the legend of *Sir Ysumbras*, his three sons joined Ysumbras and his wife, mounted upon three beasts, a lion, an unicorn and a leopard. In the dispersion from the ark: "& lyounez & lebardez to þe lake ryftes."¹⁸³

Mention of the leopard as an heraldic emblem, when it is said to be identical with the lion, is made in a few places in the verse of our period. Tame leopards were about Emetreus of Inde. In a Norman-French song we find "irrous comme lipart." To Guy of Warwick was given a steed swifter than leopard, roe or dromedary.¹⁸⁴

LINNET

See Birds.

LION

The *Bestiary* tells us that the lion stands on a hill, and if he hears a hunter or scents him, in fleeing he covers his footsteps with dust or dew, by dragging his tail over his trail. Further, the lion's cub sleeps three days, then his sire wakens him with his roar. Again, when the lion sleeps he never shuts his eyes.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² E.S.E.L. xviii. 454-9. R. of R. 78-81, 661-4, 912-5. S. Fer. 5556.

¹⁸³ C.Mi. 11629-34. Sir Y. 754-6. Clan. 536.

¹⁸⁴ W. & W. 73 ff. P.P.S. p. 89, 13-4. Ch-CTA. 2185-6. P.S.E. p. 65, 8. G. of W. 6123-6.

¹⁸⁵ Best. 1-26.

The story told by the author of *Ywaine and Gawin* has for one of its main themes the lion which shows its gratitude by its helpfulness. It carried its affection for Ywaine so far as to try to commit suicide, when its master was in danger of death, by taking a sword between its feet and placing it against a stone. This tale, like others, records how the lion licks those whom it respects; the fact of its having a rough tongue does not seem to have been known in the Middle Ages.¹⁸⁶

Three legends also mention the good qualities of the beast. The three sons of Sir Ysumbras came to his aid, mounted on a leopard, an unicorn and a lion. The legend of St. Eustas tells that the saint was thrown to the lions; these bowed before him and licked him. The third, that of St. Mary of Egypt, deals with a helpful lion, which, though not previously befriended, aids Zosimus to dig the saint's grave.¹⁸⁷

The fable of the lion sitting in judgment on the ass, and condemning it, after the wolf and the fox had escaped through bribery, is told in a *Song on the Times*. Another mention of a lion occurs in King Arthur's dream, in which the lion seized the king and carried him off into the sea.¹⁸⁸

From the epithets and similes used of the lion we can gather that in the opinion of the Middle Ages there were two sides to his character. We read of him as "cruel," "fell," "fierce," "grim," "proud," "real," "wild," and "wood." Another epithet from *Sir Tristrem* is "lopely." The Wife of Bath uses the expression: "Stiborn I was as is a leonesse." It was recognised, however, that there was another side: he could be tamed, as in the *Knights Tale*: his "gentil kind" was shown by his brushing away, "al esily," a fly that had bitten him. Gower could write of the nobleness of the lion, that if a man could understand to fall before his face, in sign of mercy and of grace, the lion would turn away without grieving him. A further good quality is recorded in *Sir Beues*: the two lions who accompanied Josian into a cave might do her no "wroth," because she was both king's daughter and maid. This belief is repeated in

¹⁸⁶ Y. & G. *passim*.

¹⁸⁷ Sir Y. 754-6. E.S.E.L. lix. 289-92; xxxix. 320 ff.

¹⁸⁸ P.S.E. pp. 197-201. L.B. 28064-75.

Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. It seems probable, though it is not actually recorded, that a similar consideration for royal birth was the reason why Hauelok, as we have already noticed, was unlikely to be injured by any wild beast.¹⁸⁹

Travellers' tales about the lion include mention of lions brown and white. Gower introduces it into a proverbial expression :

For al schal deie and al schal passe,
Als well a Leoun as an asse,
Als wel a beggere as a lord.¹⁹⁰

The *Cursor Mundi* repeats two of the statements found in the *Bestiary*, those about the lion's cub, and the sleeping with an open eye.¹⁹¹

LYNX

This animal was proverbial for the clearness and penetration of its sight ; the *Pricke of Conscience* has :

Þarfor he þat had als sharp syght,
And cler eghen and als bright
Als has a best þat men Lynx calles,
Þat may se thurgh thik stane walles ;

in the last line another MS. gives " thurgh nyne stoon walles." In prose, we have a similar statement mentioning a wall in the *Azenbite*, while Chaucer discreetly confines himself to " percen thorugh the thinges that with-stonden it." ¹⁹²

MACKEREL

See Food.

¹⁸⁹ Ch-Leg. 627. L. of A. 1990. Desp. p. 6, 4. Ch-CTF. 1146. Desp. p. 6, 4. Ch-Leg. 1605. D. of T. 3746. A. & M. 1866, etc. Sir T. 1444. Ch-CTD. 637; Leg. A. 377-82. G.C.A. vii. 3387-99. B. of H. 2387-94. Spenser, F.Q. H. 172-4.

¹⁹⁰ L. of A. 7095. G.C.A. i. 2247-9.

¹⁹¹ C.Mi. 18644-50, 18656.

¹⁹² P. of C. 574-9. A. of I. p. 81, 5-10. Ch-Boe. iii. p. 8, 43-51.

MAGPIE

See Birds.

The story of the sow that was cursed by St. Francis, and died on the third day, has been referred to ; it decayed soon, so that no raven nor pie nor other fowl would come near.¹⁹³

A subject which concerns Folklore closely is that of divination ; here is a passage from *Handlyng Synne* :

3yf you yn swerd, oþer yn bacyn,
Any chylde madyst loke þeryn,
Or yn þumbe, or yn cristal,—
wycchecraft men clepyn hyt al :
Beleue nouzt yn þe pyys cheteryng ;
Hyt ys no trouþe, but fals beleuyng.
Many beleuyn yn þe pye :
whan she comyþ lowe or hye
Cheteryng, and haþ no reste,
þan sey þey we shul haue geste.
Manyon trowyn on here wyls,
And many tymes þe pye hem gylys.¹⁹⁴

Chaucer more than once refers to the pye :

And she was proud, and pert as is a pye.

And forth she gooth, as jolif as a pye.

And I was yong and ful of ragerye,
Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.

He was al coltish, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.

. . . alle thise false foules,

.

And pyes, on hem for to crye and chyde.

¹⁹³ E.S.E.L. xviii, 311 ff.

¹⁹⁴ H.S. 351-62.

while Wyclif, writing of *Of Feigned Contemplative Life*, has :

... to blabre alle day long wiþ tonge & grete crynge, as pies
and iaies, ... ¹⁹⁵

MARTIN (BEECH MARTIN)

On the Dispersion from the Ark :

þe fox & þe folmarde to þe fryth wyndeȝ. ¹⁹⁶

MERLIN

See Birds.

MERMAIDS

See Classical.

MINOTAUR

See Classical.

MOOR-HEN

The name of this bird occurs in *A Satyre on the Consistory Courts* :

Ant heo cometh by-modered ase a mor-hen.

(Be-moithered is still a Lancashire word for bewildered.) ¹⁹⁷

MOTH

The author of the *Romaunt of the Rose* wrote of love :

It is a slowe, may not forbere

Ragges, ribaned with gold, to were. ¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Ch-CTA. 3950 ; CTB. 1399 ; CTD. 455-6 ; CTE. 1847-8 ; CTF. 647, 650. E.W.W. p. 194, 24-5.

¹⁹⁶ Clan. 534.

¹⁹⁷ P.S.E. p. 158, 6.

¹⁹⁸ R. of R. 4751-2.

MOUSE

The relations of cat and mouse, as described in the verse of our period, have already been commented upon ; but the mouse also plays its own part, and that not a brave one. Twice in Chaucer we find the simile "dronken as a mous" ; and twice the mouse's lack of courage is cited by the same author ; in one line :

I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek.¹⁹⁹

MULE

This was considered a suitable mount for a queen or woman of high degree ; but on other occasions we read of Terry, and of Guy, once when he was wounded, and again, when in grief, riding on a mule.²⁰⁰

In the *Azenbite* we find a reference to a mule as an animal given to lechery.²⁰¹

NEWTS

See Food.

NIGHTINGALE

See Classical.

See Birds.

Its well-known sweetness of song was noted by the poets of our period, and Gower wrote :

I thenke upon the nyhtingale,
Which slepeth noght be weie of kinde
For love, in bokes as I finde.²⁰²

Another reference deserves a note ; before Phoebus turned

¹⁹⁹ Ch-CTA. 261 ; CTD. 246 ; T. & C. iii. 736 ; CTD. 572.

²⁰⁰ L. of A. 175, 1033-4. G. of W. (Auch.), 223, 7-8 ; 1329-30 ; 7119-20.

²⁰¹ A. of I. p. 223, 22-3.

²⁰² C.C.A. iv. 2872-4.

the crow's colour from black to white (see Classical), its song excelled the nightingale's :

Ther-with in al this world no nightingale
Ne coude, by an hondred thousand deel,
Singen so wonder merrily and weel.²⁰³

OTTER

The otter figures in two of the legends of the saints ; Peter the Hermit's tale, told in *St. Brendan*, includes the incident of an otter bringing food, with flint and stone to make fire with which to cook it. The second legend tells how St. Cuthbert stood in the sea up to the chin. Coming afterwards to land, he could not stand for feebleness. Two otters came from the sea and licked him, then returned to the sea.²⁰⁴

OUSEL

See Food.

OWL

See Classical.

See Birds.

Two facts about the owl find reference in the poets : the shrieking of the bird, which was thought to be an omen boding death ; and the hiding of the bird by day, while other birds cried on him.

The owle al night aboute the balkes wond,
That prophet is of wo and of mischaunce.

And al day after hidde him as an oule.

Þey cryed on hym, as foules on owle.

²⁰³ Ch-CTH. 136-8, 294.

²⁰⁴ E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 642-8 ; li. 91-3.

Other passages give us :

... lovely as an owle.

... false foule.

... lokith as an houle.

and Gower has a proverb :

Bot Oule on Stock and Stock on Oule ;

The more that a man defoule,

Men witen wel which hath the werse.²⁰⁵

PANTHER

The *Bestiary* tells us that :

There is no beast fairer here on the world ;

He is black as the colour of the whale ;

All shapen with white spots ; white and trendled as a wheel.

After eating his fill, he will sleep three days in his hole ;

Then he rises and roars as loud as he may ; out of his throat comes a smell, that surpasses balsam in sweetness ;

The wild animals, when they hear him, follow him for the sweetness ;

The dragons only do not stir, while the panther roars ; but lurk still in their pit, as if they were frightened to death.²⁰⁶

It is remarkable that the panther, receiving such notice in the *Bestiary*, does not meet with comment from later poets.

PARTRIDGE

See Food.

The partridge had a bad reputation in early times, and one reminiscence of this is to be found in the poem *On the Deposition*

²⁰⁵ Ch-Leg. 2253-4 ; ; CTD. 1081. Medit. 505. P.P.S. p. 342, 26 Ch-CTF. 647-8. L. of A. 6331. G.C.A. iii. 585-7.

²⁰⁶ Best. 733-62.

of *Richard II*, where we read that when the partridge is sitting, another proud partridge comes and hatches the eggs; when the true mother comes, the chicks recognise the voice of their dame, and follow her, leaving the "lurker," who fed them ill.²⁰⁷

PEACOCK

See Birds.

There is a reference to the peacock in *Piers Plowman* and mention of vows made to it in the *Parlement of the Thre Ages*:
And there sir Porus and his prynces to the poo avowed.²⁰⁸

The peacock is taken as an example of pride in the following passages:

(*A Satyre on the Consistory Courts* :)

A pruest proud as a po.

As eny pecok he was proud and gay.

Anoþer mon proudeþ as doþ a poo.

And other mention is found in :

He stalketh as a Pocok doth,
And takth his preie so covert,
That noman wot it in apert.

A sheef of pecok-arwes brighte and kene
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily.

and, of some birds,

Cry hy hadden als a pecok.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ P.P.S. p. 393, 7, to p. 394, 20.

²⁰⁸ P.P. B. xi. 349-50. P. of 3 Ages, 365.

²⁰⁹ P.S.E. p. 159, 15. Ch-CTA. 3926. V. MS. lv. (5) 18. G.C.A. v. 6498-500. Ch-CTProl. 104-5. L. of A. 5410.

PELICAN

Isidore of Seville tells us that the pelican is said to kill its own offspring, and to mourn for them for three days; then to wound itself and to bring to life its young by the sprinkling of its own blood. In the *Complaint of the Ploughman* there is an echo of this belief; the pelican says:

“For Christ himselfe is likened to me,
That for his people died on rood;
As fare I, right so fareth he,
He feedeth his birds with his blood.”²¹⁰

PHEASANT

See Food.
See Birds.

PHOENIX

The myth about the age of the phoenix and its sacrifice and rising again from its own ashes, is given by Isidore of Seville, and in the *Complaint of the Ploughman* the aid of the phoenix as a fighting ally is invoked by the pelican; then we read:

The phenix tho began hem chace.
To flie from him it was in vaine,
For he did vengeaunce, and no grace.

A further reference to the phoenix occurs in *Pearl*:

“We calle hyr fenix of Arraby,
þat freles fleze of hyr fador,
Lyk to þe quen of cortaysye.”²¹¹

PIKE

See Food.

²¹⁰ I. of S. vii. 26. P.P.S. p. 343, 17-20.

²¹¹ I. of S. vii. 22. P.P.S. p. 345, 6-8. *Pearl*, 430-2.

PLAICE

See Food.

POPINJAY

See Food.

QUAIL

See Birds.

In addition to this reference two other passages name the quail:

I stod as styлле as dased quayle.

For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,

In jalousye I rede eek thou him binde,

And thou shalt make him couche as dooth a quaille.²¹²

RABBITS

See Food.

RAM, SHEEP, LAMB, WETHER

See Classical.

See Food.

Among the legends of saints there are two—those of Franceys and of Clement—dealing with sheep. We have already noticed the tale of the sow, which was strangling a lamb, being cursed by the saint. Further, the love of the saint for lambs was so strong that one of his friends gave him one, which kept near him, and would kneel when it saw the friars do so. The story of St. Clement tells how when he and his companions needed water, the saint struck the ground where a lamb was standing, and a good spring sprang up.²¹³

For the tale of the bear that kept the hermit's sheep, and the prophecy quoted in *Cursor Mundi*, see the notes quoted under Bear and Bull.

²¹² *Pearl*, 1084. Ch-CTE. 1202, 1205-6.

²¹³ E.S.E.L. xviii. 302 ff. ; xlvii. 475 ff.

Proverbs about sheep are :

Lo, Troilus, men seyn that hard it is
The wolf ful, and the wether hool to have.

And shame it is, if a preest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.

and among epithets and similes we find :

As meke as ever was any lamb.

And rough on the rigge, als a lombe.

Row he was also a schep.

Pey renne aboute as herdles shepe.

A man is said to be pierced through with a weapon, as a
lamb.

“ Men dredith him on uche an half,
So kalf the beore, or schep the wolf.” ²¹⁴

RAVEN

See Classical.

See Birds.

The raven is mentioned in the *Bestiary* as one of the victims
of the fox's wile.²¹⁵

There are two versions of the Biblical story of the release of
the raven from the ark. That in *Clannesse* speaks of the raven
as a rebel ; the other is found in *Cursor Mundi*.²¹⁶

Two saints' legends tell of the raven ; one has been previously

²¹⁴ Ch-T. & C. iv. 1373-4 ; CT.Prol. 503-4 ; CTG. 199. L. of A. 5407.
B. of H. 997. Medit. 452. L. of A. 2284, 2394, 1820-1.

²¹⁵ Best. 408-9.

²¹⁶ Clan. 455-68. C.Mi. 1889-92.

noticed (under Boar) in the story of Franceys ; in the other the bird plays a more prominent part, guarding the exposed body of St. Vincent, and overcoming a wolf while so doing.²¹⁷

An interesting custom in hunting operations was the breaking of the deer, during which a part called the raven's fee was cast aside. There is a description of this in *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knyzt*, and shorter references in *Sir Tristrem* and in the *Parlement of the Thre Ages*. We read :

& syþen sunder þay þe sydeȝ swyft fro þe chyne,
& þe corbeles fee þay kest in a greue.

Pe rauen he ȝaue his ȝiftes.

Cuttede corbyns bone and kest it a-waye.²¹⁸

There is a reference to Abraham's servant :

Licknes to corbin had he nan !

Other references are found in the account of Ligurge of Trace, whose hair shone black as any raven's feather ; in *Troilus and Criseyde* we are reminded of the ill-omen of the raven's qualm ; and in two proverbs, one in the *Brut*, where there is a mention of those who have heart of bare and cunning of raven ; and the other in *Cursor Mundi*, where after the tale of the Deluge,

For-þi men sais on messenger
Þat lengs lang to bring answare,
He mai be cald, with right resun,
An of messagers corbun.²¹⁹

REDBREAST

See Birds.

²¹⁷ E.S.E.L. xviii. 313 ; xxx. 138 ff.

²¹⁸ G. & G.K. 1354-5. Sir T. 502. P. of 3 Ages, 80.

²¹⁹ C.Mi. 3332. Ch-CTA. 2143-4 ; T. & C. v. 382. L.B. 30391-2. C.Mi. 1889-92.

RHINOCEROS

This beast, known as the Monoceros in early times, is described in the *Life of Alisaunder* :

A griselich hest (*sic* ? read " best ") he gonne fynde ;
 So mychel seigh he neuere, ne non swiche ;
 Two heuedes it had wel ferlich,
 To a cokedrill that on was liche,
 That othere the moneceros selcouthliche.
 His rigge was bristled as with sharp sithen ;
 Toeth he had so wrethen writhen ;
 Eighen he had so brennyng bronde.

And non arme nolde byte
 In that beest, so mote I lyuen.

In another place we find :

A best ther is, of more los,
 That is y-cleped Monoceros.
 In marreys and reods is heore wonyng,
 No best no haveth his fyghtyng.
 To-fore, y-mad is his cors.
 After the forme of an hors.
 Fete after olifant, certis :
 Hed he hath as an heort.
 Tayl he hath as an hog :
 Croked tuxes as a dog.
 Ther n'ys to hym tygre, no lyoun,
 No no best, so feloun.
 He hath, in his front strong,
 An horn foure feet long,
 So as Y in bokes fynde :
 No rasour is so kervynge.
 He sleth ypotanos, and kokadrill,
 And alle bestes to his wille.
 Hound no best dar him asayle,
 No non armed mon saun faile,

No no mon may him lache,
Bote by that he no snacche.²²⁰

SALAMANDER

The salamander that lives in the fire is referred to in the *Azenbite*.²²¹

SALMON.

See Food.

SCHARNEBUDE

Gower and the *Azenbite* speak of this beetle :

Bot where he seth of eny beste
The felthe, ther he makth his feste,
And therupon he wole alyhte,
Ther liketh him non other sihte.

Þet byeþ þe ssarnboddas þet beuleþ þe floures and louieþ
þet dong.²²²

SCORPION

The poison of the scorpion is a theme touched upon, though not very often, in the poetry of the period. We find a statement to the effect that to cure the sting of the scorpion its dead body must be applied to the wound ; for venom destroys venom. Two passages refer to the scorpion making fair with the head and poisoning with the tail ; it is a " fals flatering beste " and it " stingeth and sodeynly sleeth." ²²³

²²⁰ L. of A. 5717-24, 5729-30, 6538-59.

²²¹ A. of I. p. 167, 29-32.

²²² G.C.A. ii. 421-4. A. of I. p. 61, 33.

²²³ P.P. B. XVIII. 152-6. A. of I. p. 62, 13-4. Ch-CTE. 2057-60; MP. iii. 636-7 ; CTI. 854.

SEAL

See Food.

SHARK

One of the ingredients for the remedy prepared for Aeson by Medea is described :

Sche tok thereafter the bouele
Of the Seewolf, and for the hele
Of Eson, with a thousand mo
Of thinges that sche hadde tho.²²⁴

SHRIKE

Wariangle is a name formerly given to the shrike or butcher-bird, which has a larder in which it hangs the bodies of its prey, before eating them ; Speght says : And the common opinion is, that the thorns wherupon they thus fasten them and eat them, is afterward poysonsome.

As ful of venim been thise wariangles.²²⁵

SISKIN

The terin or siskin is mentioned in the *Romaunt of the Rose*.²²⁶

SNIPE

See Birds.

SPARROW

See Birds.

Chaucer makes a further reference to this bird, when writing of the somnour :

As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe.²²⁷

²²⁴ G.C.A. v. 4137-40.

²²⁵ Ch-CTD. 1408.

²²⁶ R. of R. 665.

²²⁷ Ch-CT.Prol. 626.

(To be concluded)



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Animal Beliefs (Continued)

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ANIMAL BELIEFS

BY P. J. HEATHER

(continued from Vol. LII, p. 223)

SPARROWHAWK

See Birds.

The reputation of this bird is revealed in the passages which follow :

That man (ne) may, for no daunting,
Make a sperhauke of a bosarde.

And fleighe ther on so a speruer.

So sperhauk ; doþ þe larke.

He loketh as a sperhauk with his yen.²²⁸

SPIDER

Considering that the *Bestiary* gives a fairly long account of the spider's doings, it is perhaps remarkable that our poets are silent on the subject. We are told that our Creator has made some loathly things for our instruction ; and the writer relates how the spider spins a web ; hides in her hole ; watches ; sees a fly caught, that cannot get out ; hastes to it ; bites it bitterly, and drinks its blood ; then hides herself again.²²⁹

²²⁸ R. of R. 4032-3. A. & M. 5268. S. Fer. 5556. Ch-CTB. 4647.

²²⁹ Best. 456-86.

SQUIRREL

Seven sages were to guard Rome : one of them, Gemes :

He let him make a garnement,
 Ase blak as ani arnement,
 And heng theron squirrel taile,
 A thousand and mo, withouten fail.²³⁰

STARLING

See Birds.

STORK

See Birds.

STURGEON

See Food.

SWALLOW

See Classical.

See Birds.

Gower tells that it hibernates :

Which ek in wynter lith swounynge ;
 and, of the Carpenter's wife, we read :
 But of hir song, it was as loude and yerne
 As any swalwe sittinge on a berne.

We find mention of its flight :

As a swalewe he can forth glide.

So swolwe doþ on flyzt.

Lastly, in a line that seems to be the equivalent of " a little bird told me," we find :

A swalu ich herd sing.²³¹

²³⁰ Proses of 7 Sages, 2775-8.

²³¹ G.C.A. v. 6006. Ch-CTA. 3257-8. L. of A. 3787. S. Fer. 4232. Sir T. 1366.

SWAN

See Classical.

See Food.

See Birds.

The Queen Beatrice was walking with the King upon the wall, when they saw a poor woman with her two children, twins. The queen, filled with the antipathy that less advanced peoples feel against twins, spoke "winged words." As a punishment, when later she was blessed with children, she gave birth to seven at once, each with a golden chain about the neck. The king's mother, Matabryne, substituted seven puppies for the children, and had the babes exposed. A hermit found them, and brought them up, with a hind serving as foster-mother. One day, when the hermit was out with one of the children, an emissary of Matabryne came, and took away the six chains remaining on the necks of the other children, who were thereupon turned into swans. Matabryne had the golden chains taken to a goldsmith, to make into a cup. He, finding the gold "wax" in his handling of it, made the cup of the half of one chain, and put aside the other five and a half. Later, one of the sons, Enyas, fought and overcame the champion of Matabryne, and, by so doing, delivered his mother from being burnt; then the goldsmith produced the five whole chains. These were taken to the water's edge; the swans came, and each chose his own, and turned to human form.

But on was alwaye a swanne-for losse of his cheyne.

Hit was doole for to seþe sorowe þat he made.

Chaucer repeats his statement, found in the *Parlement of Foules*, about the swan's death-song, in two other passages; and introduces a very expressive simile into the line:

Fat as a whale, and walkinge as a swan;

Elsewhere he has:

Whyt was this crowe, as is a snow-whyte swan,

In two other poems we find the whiteness of the swan noted :

White so fether of swan.

That ere was white so swan.

And the swan has passed for this characteristic into a proverb :

He ys no more crystyn man
þan who so kallyþ a blak oxe " swan." ²³²

TEAL

See Food.

THORNBACK

See Food.

THRUSH

See Birds.

TIGER

The tiger was described in ancient times, under the name of Manticora or Martichora, in rather fanciful terms. It is mentioned, without a description, in the *Life of Alisaunder*, under the same name. But its reputation for ferocity was well maintained in Middle-English verse. References to the tiger occur in the *Life* :

They weore to-froch, fro fot to croun,
So is the hynde apon the lyon :
And, so the tiger, that fynt y-stole
Hire weolp from hire hole.

²³² Cheu : Ass. 358-9. G.C.A. iv. 104-13. Ch-MP. v. 342, vii. 346-7 ; Leg. 1355-6 ; CTD. 1930 ; CTH. 133. K. of Tars, 12. *Amis and Amiloun*, 1359. H.S. 4319-20.

In comparison with the rhinoceros :

Ther n'ys to hym tygre, no lyoun,
No no best, so feloun.

Of tigers :

Graye bicchen als it waren,
And fyre in her mouthes baren.²³³

In three of the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer refers to tigers :

And as a cruel tygre was Arcite.

Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Inde.

That ther nis tygre, ne noon so cruel beste,
That dwelleth either in wode or in foreste
That nolde han wept, if that he wepe coude.

The falcon, speaking of the tercelet, says :

Anon this tygre, ful of doublesnesse,
Fil on his knees with so devout humblesse.²³⁴

TITMOUSE

See Food.

The wildness, the new-fangledness and the falseness of this bird are mentioned in the following passages :

But wente fram hom as a moppe wild.

And tho that hadde doon unkindenesse—
As dooth the tydif, for new-fangelnesse.

In which were peynted alle thise false foules,
As beth thise tydifs, tercelets, and oules.²³⁵

²³³ L. of A. 7093-100, 1888-91, 6548-9, 5394-5.

²³⁴ Ch-CTA. 1657 ; CTE. 1199 ; CTF. 419-21, 543-4.

²³⁵ P. of the 7 S. 1414. Ch-Leg.Prol.B. 153-4 ; CTF. 647-8.

TOAD

A belief existed in the fourteenth century that this creature could not endure the smell of the vine. It is stated in two prose works of that date :

Vor he ne may nazt þolye þane guode smel of þe ilke
smerieles namore þanne þe boterel þanne smel of þe vine.

For certes, swiche scorneres faren lyk the foule tode, that
may nat endure to smelle the sote savour of the vyne
whanne it florisseth.

In other passages the word is used as a term of abuse. In the life of St. Vincent :

þo gradden þe tormentores : " we ne schullen neuere ouer-
come þis tade."

Thai slong him down as a tode
And helle houndes to him lett.²³⁶

TROUT

Hale as a trout is a simile that occurs in *Cursor Mundi*.²³⁷

TURBOT

See Food.

TURTLE DOVE

See Birds.

This bird is generally accepted in Middle-English verse as a type of conjugal constancy and sorrowful mourning. The *Bestiary* account is :

She keeps love all her life ;
Is a pattern to women ;

²³⁶ A. of I. p. 187, 28-30. Ch-CTI. 636. E.S.E.L. xxx. 60. Desp. p. 26, 19-20.

²³⁷ C.Mi. 8150, 11884.

Is always with her mate ; he lies who says they sunder ;
If her mate dies, she has him in heart night and day.

The *Agenbite* gives :

To loki þet stat of wodewehod me ssel sterie þe uorbisne of
þe turle. Vor ase zayþ þe boc of kende of bestes·efter þet
þe turle heþ ylore hare make:hi ne ssel neuremo habbe
uelazrede mid opren·ac alneway hi is one and be-ulyzt þe
uelazrede of opren.

The *Marchantes Tale* mentions the turtle dove :

But ever live as widwe in clothes blake,
Soul as the turtle that lost hath hir make.

and :

The turtles vois is herd, my douve swete ;
The winter is goon, with alle his reynes wete ;
Com forth now, with thyn eyen columbyn !

We meet again with the idea of fidelity in :

þe turtel þat is for sorouȝ lene,
And tredeþ on no gras grene,
Sipen hire make is ded.

& seiþ þat heo schal liuen alone
as turtul on þe treo.
Euermore with-outen Make.²³⁸

UNICORN

In the *Life of Alisaunder* there is a passage in which *Monoceros* are mentioned and, four lines further in the narrative, unicornes. These may be two names for the same creature : we find also in *Barlaam & Josaphat* this line :

An vnycorn hym mette,;þat þouȝt hym to sle.

Now *Solinus* writes of the *Monoceros* as "atrocissimum . . .

²³⁸ Best. 694-712. A. of I. p. 226, 1-5. Ch-CTE. 2079-80 ; CTE. 2139-41. *St. Alexius*, 424-6. (in Vernon, 128-30.)

monstrum " that cannot be taken alive. It must therefore remain doubtful whether there are two beasts in question, or only one ; for though it would be idle to expect unanimity in all writers, it is hard to reconcile with Solinus' statement the story of the unicorn that bore away Ysumbras' young son, and did not destroy him, seeing that later in the tale the son comes, riding on the unicorn, now apparently tamed. In keeping, however, with legend of Sir Ysumbras, we find elsewhere allusion to the infant Christ as the " wyld vnicorn " that had become tame.²³⁹

The heraldic unicorn does not seem to correspond at all closely with the description given in the *Life of Alisaunder* of the Monoceros (see Rhinoceros).²⁴⁰

WEASEL

Ovide seith: that " the litel wesele wol slee the grete bole and the wilde hert."²⁴¹

WERWOLF

The belief in shape-shifting cannot properly be called medieval ; for from ancient times it has persisted until recently. The subject is too wide to be considered adequately in this paper ; but, for our present purpose, the romance of William of Palerne will supply most of what is needed.

The story of the romance is briefly this : Queen Braunden, the second wife of the King of Spain, changed, by means of certain charms known to her, her step-son into a werwolf. When her own child, William, was four years old, he was seized by this werwolf, who escaped with his burden into the sea. The child was adopted by a foster-father, and after many adventures grew up, and fell in love with Melior. On this attachment becoming known, the two had to flee, and were *disguised as bears* in bear-skins. When these skins no longer served as an

²³⁹ L. of A. 7093, 7097. B. & J. 449. Solinus, c. lvii. Sir Y. 382-3, 754-6. W. of S. v. 112-4 ; vi. 61-6.

²⁴⁰ L. of A. 6538-59.

²⁴¹ Ch-CTB. 2515.

effective disguise, the werwolf killed a hart and a hind, and the two donned the skins of these animals. All three escaped to Sicily, in a boat in which they hid. The werwolf gains access to the King of Spain; William wins worship in fighting, and those who were overcome by him sent a messenger to the Queen of Spain, saying: "None of us prisoners shall be released till you have restored the werwolf, Alphonse, to his original shape." This the queen effected, and the means she adopted are given in some detail:

pan stint sche no lenger but bout stryf went
 Into a choys chaumber þe clerli was peinted,
 þat non went hire with but þe werwolf al-one.
 þan rauzt sche forþ a ring a riche & a nobul,
 þe ston þat þeron was stigt was of so stif vertu,
 þat neuer man vpon mold migt it him on haue,
 ne schuld he with wicchecraft be wicched neuer-more,
 ne per(i)sche with no poyoun ne purliche enuenemed;
 ne wrongli schuld he wiue þat it in wold hadde.
 þat riche ring ful redily with a red silk þrede
 þe quen bond als bliue a-boute þe wolwes necke.
 seþe feiþli of a forcer a fair bok sche rauzt,
 & radde þer-on redli rigt a long while,
 so þat sche made him to man in þat mene while,
 as fair as fetys and als freli schapen,
 as any man vpon mold migt on deuise.
 was non fairre in world but william allone,
 for he of fairnesse was flour of frekes þat liue.
 whan þe werwolf wist þat he was man bi-come,
 fair of alle fasoun as him fel to bene,
 he was gretli glad no gum þurt him blame,
 ful wel him liked þe lessun þat þe lady radde.
 sopli þat he was so naked sore he was a-schamed.²⁴²

It is interesting to note that, in one place, Pliny professes disbelief in the werwolf superstition, and shortly afterwards records a case where a man became a werwolf after eating a boy.²⁴³

²⁴² W. of P. *passim*; also 4421-43.

²⁴³ Pliny, viii. 34.

WHALE

With the whale, we come to the end of the creatures described in the *Bestiary*, which says :

Cethegrande is a fish, the greatest that is in water. You would say that it is an island.

When hungry, he gapes wide and sends forth an odour from his throat, the sweetest that is on land : fish come in : he closes his jaws : the small he takes, but may not begrip the large.

He lives at the bottom of the sea : till the storm when winter and summer strive. He comes to the top, and is taken for an island. Men land and light a fire : he dives ; they drown.²⁴⁴

The story of Iastoni in the *Life of St. Brendan* agrees in many of its details with the account just given ; though instead of drowning the monks that land upon his back, the fish swims with them to the Paradise of Fowls. The *Life*, however, adds a quaint detail ; the beast tries night and day :

To pulte his tail in his mouþ:ac for gretnisse he nemai.²⁴⁵

The story of Jonah and the whale is told in *Patience*. Similes in which the whale is introduced occur in some poems ; thus Merlin, in his description of the red dragon, says :

He hadde a bodi as a whal.

Fat as a whale—has been quoted—while another simile, which can be taken to refer to ivory, is : white as whale bone !²⁴⁶

WOLF

See Classical.

Some of the saints' legends, which mention wolves, have been noted ; that of St. Vincent, whose body was guarded by the raven ; that of Eustas, one of whose sons was carried off by a

²⁴⁴ Best. 499-540.

²⁴⁵ E.S.E.L. xxxvi. 163 ff. (176 quoted).

²⁴⁶ *Patience*, 267-8, etc. A. & M. 1495. Ch-CTD. 1930. Sir Y-250.

wolf ; and that of St. Blase, where the wolf restored the poor woman's sow. A further example occurs in the legend of St. Edmund. Against nature, a wild wolf kept his body.²⁴⁷

Among travellers' tales we find a record of the wolfings found by Alexander :

Wolflynges they byset also,
Merveillouse men both tho !
Wolfus by the navel downward,
And men thennes upward.
By robbery they liveth, and skickyng ;
In cleoves is heore wonyng.

Also a curious story is given in the *Azenbite*, where the wolf is reputed to take outcast children and protect them from other beasts. This, the author says, he has found in a Bestiary ; though it does not figure in our English version.²⁴⁸

Several proverbial expressions deal with the wolf :

Al is peril that he schal seie,
Him thenkth the wolf is in the weie.

Lo, Troilus, men seyn that hard it is
The wolf ful, and the wether hool to have.

" Men dredith him on uche an half,
So kalf the beore, or schep the wolf."

" The gretteste clerkes been noght the wysest men,"
As whylom to the wolf thus spak the mare ;
Of al hir art I counte noght a tare.²⁴⁹

Similes and epithets applied to the wolf are many. The *Brut* has the " howling " wolf, and " may slay as any wolf." The same work also gives a description of an attack on a sheep-fold

²⁴⁷ E.S.E.L. xxx. 138 ff. ; lix. 86-90 ; lxxiii. 49-58 ; xliv. 69-72.

²⁴⁸ L. of A. 6272-7. A. of I. p. 186, 1-3.

²⁴⁹ G.C.A. iv. 327-8. Ch-T. & C. iv. 1373-4. L. of A. 1820-1. Ch-CTA. 4054-6.

by a wolf. Others are : " hungry," " wood," " raggid," " hore," " a raviner " ; while other passages are :

A she-wolf hath also a vileins kinde ;

yet we also find :

" doon worse than wolves. For soothly, whan the wolf hath ful his wombe, he stinteth to strangle sheep."

From all this, it will be seen that in spite of an occasional word of approval, the wolf bore a very bad character in mediæval times, and men must have rejoiced in England when the truage of three hundred wolves each year in King Edgar's time brought about their extinction in this island.²⁵⁰

WOODCOCK

See Food.

WOODPECKER

A reference to the papingay as being blisful occurs :

Than is blisful, many a sythe,
The chelaundre and the papingay.

This bird is said to be the green woodpecker, and the identification is confirmed by two other quotations :

And hoom he gooth, mery as a papejay.

Singeth, ful merier than the papejay,

for, though the woodpecker is said to have no song, the usual note is, as Gilbert White phrased it, " a sort of loud and hearty laugh " ; an ancient rendering of which has given to the bird one of its popular names, " yaffle."²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ L.B. 1546, 20123, 20269, 21301-12. L. of A. 2184, 3271, 4471, 5031. Ch-Boe. iv. p. 3, 115-9. CTH. 183-6 ; CTI. 768-9. *Chron. of England*, 730-5.

²⁵¹ R. of R. 80-1. Ch-CTB. 1559 ; CTE. 2322. Kirkman and Jourdain, *British Birds*, p. 77.

WORM

The *Brut* mentions the movement of a man in a trance as being like a worm's ; and, in another place, speaks of Pelluz as having insight into the nature of worms. The 'kuynde' of worm, which St. Martin had to his heste, is referred to in the *Legendary*, and the description of the Dispersion from the Ark has :

Wylde wormez to her won wryþez in þe erþe.

Grisild begs that she should not :

Be seyn al bare ; wherfor I yow preye,
Lat me nat lyk a worm go by the weye.

and to this idea of nakedness the *Agenbite* adds those of foulness and want of value. The Vernon MS. mentions a saying of St. Bernard :

Seint Bernard seiþ in his Bok
þat mon is worm & wormes Cok,
And wormes he schal feden.²⁵²

We end this survey with a quaint line from the *Destruction of Troy*, which shows that a wider significance was given to the word " worm " than is usual nowadays :

Of lions & Libardes & other laithe wormes.²⁵³

²⁵² L.B. 17910-3, 30491-500. E.S.E. L. lxiv. 99-100. Clan. 533. Ch-CTE. 879-80. A. of I. p. 215, 31-6. V. MS. xlviii. 1-3.

²⁵³ D. of T. 1573.